



# LUTHERAN EDUCATION

A Journal of the Faculty of Concordia University, River Forest

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## CONTENTS

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### The Arts and Lutheran Education

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 6  | The Writing of <i>Branta</i> and Other Affections          |
| 20 | The Gift of Global Song to the Congregation                |
| 31 | Taking Ethical Action as an Artist                         |
| 47 | Telling the Good News about Jesus in the Year of the Child |

# Lutheran Education

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# Departments

- 4      From Where I Sit**  
Toward a Theology of Frills in Lutheran Education  
*Jonathan Barz*
- 58     Administrative Talk**  
What Students Want from Their Principal  
*Glen Kuck*
- 60     DCE Expressions**  
Sensitizing Parents to the Role of Assets in Faith Development  
*Brent Howard*
- 63     Educating the Whole Child**  
From a Misconception to the Meaningful: An Open Letter to Lutheran Educators  
*Rich Fischer*
- 65     Today's Lutheran Educator**  
The Power of Participation  
*Jonathan Laabs*
- 67     Multiplying Ministries**  
Blessed Are . . . We!  
*Rich Bimler*
- 69     Secondary Sequence**  
I Don't Want Any More Self-Esteem!  
*Craig Parrott*
- 
- 71     Teaching the Young**  
Children and Creativity  
*Shirley Morgenthaler*
- 73     Book Reviews**  
Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions  
*Jonathan Barz*
- 80     A Final Word**  
Encouraging Random Acts of Kindness  
*George Heider*

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## **In This Issue: The Arts and Lutheran Education**

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### **6 The Writing of *Branta* and Other Affections**

One of the finest Christian storytellers of our time explores the power of stories to help young children confront the basic truths of existence and “to carry the child through difficulty toward a blessed, credible conclusion.” Wangerin’s essay—lyrically blending story, meditation, and the writer’s reflection on his craft—offers a compelling argument for stories as essential tools for adults who seek to guide children, “to teach them and lead them, to train up their souls in the ways they should go.”

*by Walter Wangerin, Jr.*

### **20 The Gift of Global Song to the Congregation**

Music from other cultures is a tremendous gift to our worship services, the author affirms, connecting us to other Christians and to God, the creator of all song. But what is the right way to borrow such songs? What is their appropriate place in Lutheran liturgy, and how can we incorporate them into our worship while being respectful of their origins in cultures different from our own?

*by Helen Grosshans*

### **31 Taking Ethical Action as an Artist**

Martin Luther’s teaching on social ethics, that the essence of the Christian life is expressed inwardly in faith toward God and outwardly in love or works towards one’s neighbor, calls each of us to take an active stance in the world as we serve as mediators between God and our neighbor. With examples drawn from her own art courses, Gretchen Beck illustrates how students can be encouraged to live out this social ethic as they act upon their Christian faith.

*by Gretchen Beck*

### **47 Telling the Good News about Jesus in the Year of the Child**

In The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 2001 is both the Year of the Child and a year committed to “telling the Good News about Jesus.” “We want to introduce our children to Jesus and to help them become well acquainted with him and his good news,” Patrick Ferry affirms. “For the introduction to Jesus to be complete, however, we must not only be acquainted with the Savior but also know well the young people whom we introduce to him.” In response to this need, he offers a portrait of “the millennials” and explores the implications of this portrait for ministry to today’s youth.

*by Patrick Ferry*

# From Where I Sit

by Jonathan M. Barz, Editor

## Toward a Theology of Frills in Lutheran Education

The fastest growing segment of American education during my lifetime (I'm just guessing here) has to be the field of educational statistics. About once a week or so, I open my mailbox to find an announcement from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). These assessments of the educational progress of American schoolchildren are generally discouraging, although every now and then a beam of hope shines through. Last week's headline bore good news: "U.S. Ninth-Graders Score Above the International Average on Civic Knowledge." Thanks to the untiring efforts of the NCES I can also tell you where our nation's fourth-graders stand in their reading ability: only 32% are identified as reading at the "Proficient level" (the level identified as the level all students should reach). The news in science isn't bad: "Among 13-year-olds, the average science proficiency score of U.S. students was comparable to those of students in Canada, France, Ireland, Israel, Scotland, and Spain, and higher than the scores for Jordan." Our math scores, however, are dismal: "In the 1991 mathematics assessment, only 9-year-olds in Slovenia and 13-year-olds in Jordan and Spain scored approximately the same or lower than their U.S. counterparts."

So how are we doing in music, visual arts, and theater, you ask? (And if you aren't asking, why not?) The truth is, I have no idea. Among all the reports of educational progress that have come through my mailbox, week after week, month after month, I can't recall a single one that addressed how American students are doing in the arts. In an educational climate in which so much emphasis has been put on assessing and quantifying learning, what can we conclude when we realize how little attention has been paid to evaluating this area? Maybe it reflects the understanding that nationally or internationally normed assessments, always problematic, are even more so when we focus on the arts—but probably not. My guess is that it actually reflects not so much humility about the validity of testing in this area as a lack of urgency about education in the arts.

As cuts in federal and state funding hit schools in the public sector in recent years, often the arts were the first to feel the pinch. Students' opportunities for experiences in the visual arts, music, dance, and theater have steadily diminished as arts

education has come to be seen as at best a desirable extra and, at worst, an elitist diversion from the real core of the curriculum. The situation was movingly depicted in the 1996 movie *Mr. Holland's Opus*. Its star, Richard Dreyfuss, summed up the movie's message in a television appearance shortly before the premiere. "The performing arts, unfortunately, in this country are in danger of becoming the un-performing arts in many of our schools," he said. "But music and dance and drama are, as a statesman once said, the yardstick by which a culture and society is measured."

In Lutheran schools, often chronically short on funding, the temptation to consider the arts a frill—nice to have but something we can easily do without—is equally strong. Those of us who are closest to the stoic, rural, Midwestern roots of so much Lutheran education may not sense much support for arts education in the Lake Wobegonian earthiness of our fore-bearers. But we'll do much better if we look further back in time, to Martin Luther himself, for some theological and pedagogical reflection on the value of the arts in Lutheran schools.

Already in 1525, as he worked to establish a system of territorial schools, Luther advocated a remarkably broad curriculum, including literature, poetry, history, and music. When iconoclasts (the image breakers) after the Reformation sought to strip churches of art and religious imagery as relics of "popery," Luther defended the value of the visual arts as a resource for nurturing Christian faith and living. "If it is not a sin but good to have the image of Christ in my heart," he asked, "why should it be a sin to have it in my eyes?" To those who saw the arts as beneath the concern of "heavenly minded people," Luther responded, "Nor am I at all of the opinion that all the arts are to be overthrown and cast aside by the Gospel, as some superspiritual people protest; but I would gladly see all the arts, especially music, in the service of him who has given and created them." And to those who argued for a narrowly vocational education, he answered with classic Lutheran bluntness, "A schoolmaster must know how to sing; otherwise I do not look at him."

Three of the essays in this issue of *Lutheran Education* affirm and flesh out the value Luther placed on the arts in Christian education. The extraordinary storyteller Walt Wangerin, Jr. points to the crucial role stories play in shaping the hearts and souls of the young, helping them to name and come to terms with "all the basic truths of existence." Helen Grosshans, echoing Luther's passion for music as "an outstanding gift of God and next to theology," calls on us to embrace global music as a way to bind ourselves more closely to our Creator and to others in his creation. Finally, Gretchen Beck shows how an art curriculum can help students grasp and enact Luther's social ethic of "faith active in love." Together these articles encourage us to value the arts as essential components of the core curriculum of Lutheran schools, "frills" we can't live without.†

## The Writing of *Branta* and Other Affections

*Walter Wangerin, Jr., an internationally known author, speaker, and storyteller, is Writer in Residence at Valparaiso University, where he holds the Jochum Chair. He has written more than 25 books for children and adults. Wangerin previously served as the pastor of an inner-city church in Evansville, IN, for more than 15 years. Reprinted from Swallowing the Golden Stone by Walter Wangerin, Jr., copyright ©2000 Walter Wangerin, Jr. Used by permission of Augsburg Fortress ([www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org)).*

**O**ne: Wild Things  
Maurice Sendak once told me of the furor that followed the publication of his children's book, *Where the Wild Things Are*. In picture and elementally simple language, the story follows a small boy to bed, and then into his vivid, funny, and sometimes disquieting imagination as the bedroom itself morphs into a terrible woods and frightening creatures appear: the wild things. Many parents and some reviewers were downright upset that small children would see such stuff. They believed it would damage the children, implanting frights and fears in innocent brains, inspiring nightmares. Sleep? Sendak hath murdered sleep.

But the book prevailed, Sendak told me, because the book was right. It was the tender-hearted parent, the hyper-solicitous reviewer that was wrong. Far from inaugurating fears in children, such books as his gave a habitation and a name to fears the children already experienced, but amorphously, perplexedly.

One of the most important commandments for the creation of an effective children's tale is: thou shalt not condescend!

Adults who write to their *image* of a child, rather than writing to genuine children, do in a real sense utter baby talk. And they miss the mark of a child's complex, intense experience. They make a conventional assumption of pastel innocence, angelic goodness, fresh unsullied souls ("trailing clouds of glory do we come/From God, who is our home")—and in consequence their language lisps, their menu of topics is reduced to the sugar cookie, and their attitude is offensive. Even as they presume to know better than the child, they present a teller and a tale too simple and simply *less* than a child can (and ought to, and wants to) experience. Simpletons tell simplistic tales.

But in fact, as Maurice Sendak knows and has demonstrated over and over (*In the Night Kitchen*, *Outside Over There*) stories can embrace all of the basic truths of this existence. They can confront every form of difficulty (remember? Remember? Don't you remember the thicket in which you lived as a child?) because children are already experts in difficulty! And having both acknowledged and named the difficulties which children had only callowly *sensed* before, the plots of these stories can carry the child *through* difficulty toward a blessed, credible conclusion. And such conclusions to plots are, as you know, solutions to problems, now discovered not in rational explanations, but in experience.

## Two: The Robber Under My Bed

Let the adult write stories to the child *he* was and *she* was years ago, to the interior of that child, where emotions spiked and sank with extreme—not to say "world-shaking"—intensity. For what child does not already know fears as doomful as darkness and the void? What child has not felt soul-pangs of guilt? And jealousy? What child has not laughed with such a helpless delight that heaven was surely at hand?

William Blake wrote two sets of poems not so much for children (though children are quite able to receive them) as *about* children. The first set he called *Songs of Innocence*, from which, this example: "'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean/The children walking two & two, in red & blue & green . . ." ("Holy Thursday I"). The second set, which matches the first in titles, but contrasts it in vision, he called *Songs of Experience*: "Is this a holy thing to see,/In a rich and fruitful land,/Babies reduced to misery,/Fed with cold and usurous hand?" (from "Holy Thursday II").

Blake was well aware that a child's heart knows both delight and despair. But knows it mutely (lacking a language to frame, form, or confront it). Knows it lonely (if no one can companion the child through the halls and tunnels of her interior life).



Knows it meekly and weakly (since, without a name for the experience, the experience is much larger than her own powers of control and survival).

But it is the well-told story that can lend form and companionship and a name to the raw, inchoate experience!

By *story* the child might survive—particularly because story does not move by the cold calculations of reason, but rather by the swift and sensuous experiences of *imagination*.

So let me tell you the story of a story—and of stories in general, how they work. For when I was young and very young, I had already begun to “story” my universe, and by the force of

imagination (by the shape of this storying) to make some sense of it. This is the writer’s craft and the child’s natural response, the child’s native ability; child and artist *both* draw, by the same sensitivities, upon the same resources. There is a kinship here which rational thought and analytic adulthood can cancel. But the child *alone* with his imagination lacks (as the following example illustrates) one essential for the safe, persuasive conclusion of the story-experience: an *external* story-teller, a companion of love and authority to validate the imaginative flights of the child.

Stories can embrace all of the basic truths of this existence. They can confront every form of difficulty. . . because children are already experts in difficulty! And having both acknowledged and named the difficulties which children had only callowly *sensed* before, the plots of these stories can carry the child *through* difficulty toward a blessed, credible conclusion.

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Once upon a time, when I was six—in the autumn of the year when I was in the first grade and walking some distance to and from the schoolhouse—there was a robber under my bed.

This is, as the best of stories always are, the truth.

Every night when my brother and I ascended the steps into our attic-bedroom, I knew with dreadful conviction that the robber had already secreted himself beneath

## *The Writing of "Branta"*

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our double-bed mattress. Such knowledge caused in me several sorts of torment: for my own skin, should he reach up and snatch me, yes. Of course. But that was the least of my worries. I worried rather more for my brother Paul, one year younger than I and completely oblivious of such proximate horrors; and I was in a state of trembling responsibility for the rest of my family. Robbers destroy. They can, of a sudden, break out and kill everything a small boy loves.

I was the oldest child of four-and-a-half children. I had been given the name of my father: Walter, as he was Walter. I was the only one in day-long school. I was the only one aware of the robber. Upon me, and upon no other, had fallen the task of preserving my family alive. *That* was the greatest torment of all.

The room in which we slept was an attic. Dad had built walls into it, hiding the darker corners and the insulation and the rib-like trusses; and then he had said to us, "Your new bedroom." But we knew better. It smelled like a attic. The ceiling slanted as low as attic ceilings slant. There was one window at the far end, small and slashed by branch-shadows in the night: 'twas an attic. Where else would a canny robber choose to hide? Surely not in warmer bedrooms below. Rather, in the alien spaces, in the hedges and the fences at the *edge* of civilization: in otherness.

I was, it must be recorded, not altogether without advantage. I knew the rules of the game. For example, I knew that the robber was there, but the robber didn't know that I knew. Nor would he, if he could possibly help it, reveal himself to me—in which case the jig would be up, and though he might rush a-slaughtering through our house, he'd never get anything for it. Therefore, as long as I played innocent—and as long as I stayed *awake*, thereby giving him good reason to stay concealed beneath the bed—I could control the situation and preserve my dear ones alive. It was a frightfully dicey balance. It was, after all, a mortal game. And it was exhausting me.

Well, every night I made much noise as Paul and I ascended the stairs. And I talked loudly, jovially to my brother while we changed into pajamas—as if all were truly well, and I was happy. (I spent energies, you see, in two opposing directions: upon my own private fears and my stratagems, and also upon a false, huffing happiness.) And once we were in bed, and in the dark, and watching the choppy-fingered shadows upon the window, I told Paul stories. I continued the stories until he fell sweetly asleep. And then I forced myself even then to talk, to talk, and so to keep the robber in hiding and my family out of danger.

But a child can keep up such midnight watches only so long.

And then he cracks.

One evening in October, my mother said, "Time for bed."

Paul cheerily began to trot toward the door and the steps up to our attic.

## *Wangerin*

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I, on the other hand, astonished myself by saying, "No."

I, in my extremity; I, at my wit's end, spontaneously and in genuine anguish, said, "No, Mom. No."

"What?" said the mother who, being unused to disagreement, was herself somewhat astonished. "What did you say?"

"I can't, Mom," I said. "We can't. We just can't go to bed."

"Yes, you can," she said, her eyes flashing. I recall that she was sitting in a living room chair at that moment. "And, Wally, you *will*!"

She didn't understand, of course. But her not understanding would be the death of me. I broke into tears.

"Wally?" she said, more softly. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, oh," I sobbed.

"Tell me," she said.

And I told her. I said, "There's a robber under our bed. Every night, a robber—"

"Oh, Wally!" Mom expostulated. "You know better than that."

"No, Mom! No!" I earnestly argued, opening my eyes wide. "There *is*! He's there right now."

Mom looked at me a moment. Then, abruptly, she stood up. "Come with me," she said, and marched toward the attic door.

Oh, how my heart kicked and blamed me then! My mother is a bold woman. Mostly, that was good. But this time it could kill her.

"Mom! Mom! You don't understand!"

I raced after her. I would have run up the steps first, if I could have. But she was the swifter. Up the steps she strode. I rushed after her. But when I reached the top of the staircase, she was already at the side of my bed, bending at the hips. She reached and took hold of the bedspread where it hung to the floor. And then, in a grand, dramatic, sweeping motion—and with a cry of "See?"—she snatched spread and blankets and sheet off the bed entirely, opening the under-bed caverns for my inspection.

Slowly I bent, too. And I saw: dust bunnies, comic books, junk—and no robber. . . .

. . . *that* night!

And Paul was staring at me now. The boy at five had just encountered two explanations of a serious sense of trouble: our mother's rational and evidential "proofs" of its absence; and my "storied" version, which acknowledged its reality, but which at the same time offered some slight advantage to the kid who knew the rules.

Which do you think he would believe? Well, the question is better put: which

## *The Writing of "Branta"*

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*form* was more congenial to his child's mind? Yes: mine. Yes: story, because children by nature solve problems by imagination, by giving personalities, *personhoods* to the abstractions they cannot otherwise understand.

Therefore, Paul and I were together convinced *not* that the robber did not exist, but rather that the robber was still watching outside the window, still waiting to clamber in.

Clearly, the adult method of empirical analysis neither persuaded us nor could comfort us. What it did accomplish, however, was the opposite of our mother's intent: it removed from us the best ally we might have had, an adult who would not only enter the premises of "story" as I had spontaneously begun to write it; who would not only accept this personification of evil; but who would also take upon herself the role of story *teller*, by plot and imagination to walk us through the evil to a sweet solution/conclusion.

For, there *was* an evil abroad. There was an evil horribly near.

At school I discovered that I could no longer count on the goodness of other people. Nor could I, outside of my home's environment, always find a motive for the "bad" things they did. Laws were lost. Good order was exploding. For there was a fellow in the sixth grade, huge, his face blazing with pimples, who greeted me regularly with a hit to the solar plexus. And there was a widow-woman up the road whom other youths tormented mercilessly—until, that very autumn!—she came walking down my street at night in her nightgown, confused, weeping, barefoot and crazy. I never saw her again after that. Where did she go? And why would people want to hurt her?

Evil had entered my life. The shards and pieces of evil, miserably disconnected. Evil which, should it invade the consoling home, could destroy those dearest to me. A bewildering evil before which I was completely helpless. Ah, but I could—this nascent story-teller could—invoke fantasy to "story" it! And I did: I embodied formless evil in a figure, the robber, and I wrote into my story (what the credible universe of any story must have) contingent rules of action, by which rules the major character of the tale (that was me, of course) could find some advantage over evil after all.

Mom's methods did not solve the problem.

Nor can the children's story which refuses to acknowledge evil in a child's life solve the problem it will not name.

But the story that attends to the real problems of the child's existence can solve them, precisely because it *is* a story, and only a story. Fairy tales are a "safe" way to live through difficulty, since all the horrors are present and apparent and

suffered—but only fantastically, in imagination. In imagination, too, they are overcome.

On the other hand, the tools of the triumph are often discovered within the hero of the story, with which the child-listener of the story is invited to identify. That is to say: the *tools* are not merely fantasy; they are real characteristics heretofore unrecognized by the child, but brought forth into his consciousness and placed into his hand as a real-world advantage when he encounters real-world problems. Hansel and Grethel discover bravery and trust/trustworthiness in one another and cleverness, by which they triumph over the witch that would eat Hansel for dinner. And the child listening to the tale (who may have already experienced the fears of being abandoned by his and her parents) now *experiences* the power of bravery and trust and planned cleverness. And Branta learns the power of a self-giving love (which is the real and deeper tool represented by the Golden Stone). And these tools, as I say—being discovered in one's *self*—are not themselves merely stuff of fantasy. They are real. And they are the child's ever thereafter.

If the tale-teller is an adult who sees more than her child had seen in himself.

Moreover, the very form and the plot-order of the story becomes a map through some very real thickets of difficulty yet ahead for the child. And the value of this map is that it was drawn in experience, not in merely rational explanations. Explanations are printed on the brain alone, after which the child must labor to recall them and revise them to new circumstances and apply them. Note: the *child* must, perhaps when she is weakest, labor toward her own solution. But experience is printed upon the child whole, mind and emotion and senses and affections and fears and delights, available even to spontaneous action and response—for the child has been here before, has acted suddenly and passionately to meet this difficulty before, has laughed in victory before, but all in imagination.

In other words (and to use another, more substantial metaphor) the child has uttered the name of this thing before, knows its name by heart, and can control and command by the use of that name.

### **Three: A Local Habitation and a Name**

In the Book of Genesis, chapter thirty-two, the Patriarch Jacob, returning to the land of his birth, fears to meet his older brother Esau, from whom he had usurped both his birthright and his father's blessing. Twenty years before, Esau had sworn to kill him. Jacob seeks to appease his powerful brother by sending ahead of himself all his goods in waves and waves as gifts for Esau. (Look how rich he has become! And look how generous!) Over the deep gorge of the Jabbok, Jacob sends all his cattle, all

## *The Writing of "Branta"*

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his serving people—even his wives and his children. And now it is night. And now the man named *Jacob*, the "Trickster," the "Usurper," is alone.

No, not altogether alone. "And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day."

A man: much more than a man.

And that wrestling match must have been titanic, since the patriarchs of Genesis were considered to have been both mighty and massive. (For didn't Jacob use a stone as his pillow, once? And wasn't that stone still there for people to see?—a monument of proportions immovable!)

"Let me go," that figure says, "for the day is breaking."

Such seeming fear of the daylight makes Jacob think he's wrestling a night spirit—some sort of divinity, one powerful enough to have put his own hip out of joint. Therefore, at one point Jacob makes a most telling request:

"Tell me, I pray, your name."

Why the name, particularly?

Well, In those days it was believed that numinous beings surrounded human beings invisibly, with extraordinary powers to determine their lives, but from whom the humans could not by their own strength free themselves. (This is not unlike all the forces that children believe to exist in their worlds, the Sendakian "Wild Things" over which, when yet unstoried, the children have no power, but which affect them personally and specifically.) Now, if one of these spirit beings became visible, became tangible in the visible sphere of life, where humans themselves lived; and if the human who encountered it could learn its *name*, (1) that human learned also the spirit's nature and its intent; (2) that human could, by uttering the name, summon it, obligate it, command it.

In fact, Jacob is wrong. This is no mere spirit of the night. This is the Lord God (with remarkable love paying attention to a single human), who does not permit his mystery or his freedom to be touched. Therefore Jacob's opponent deflects his request with a rhetorical question: "Why is it that you ask my name?" and refuses to give the name till later, later.

But I tell that story here for the value of Jacob's presumption: even as he might have reversed his relationship with a spiritual (bodiless, powerful, amorphous) being by learning its name and thereby taking command, so children can (truly!) reverse *their* relationships with the powers which *they* believe to surround them . . . by learning the names of these powers; by learning the name of the experience of one's encounter with these powers.

And stories *are* such names! The stories whole, I mean. And not the mute words

printed upon a page, but the *experience* of the child who enters the tale and lives it: that is, altogether, in all its parts, the name.

Oh, and there's one other element I want to take from Jacob's tale. God (for God it is that wrestles with him, and God it always was against whom he had striven, even when he thought the opponent nought but a night spirit, even when he thought his opponents nought but his brother Esau or his uncle Laban), God, I say, also asks Jacob for *his* name, and Jacob complies: "My name is Jacob, the Trickster, the Usurper." Then God the Creator, God the Wrestler, changes Jacob's name, thereby giving Jacob a whole new identity—and making the man also intensely aware of his identity: "Your name

shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." *Israel*: a pun. It is explained here to mean one who strives "with" God—but is that *against* God? Or *beside* God, on his side? Hum.

Yet my point here is this: that the child who engages as fully and as personally with a story as Jacob here engages with the deity at the edge of the Jabbok (both wrestling and answering questions, talking, dialoguing) may, like Jacob, discover a piece of her *own* identity, and call her *own* self by name. To identify well with a major character in a story *is* to identify oneself.

Even as Jacob might have reversed his relationship with a spiritual being by learning its name and thereby taking command, so children can (truly!) reverse *their* relationships with the powers which *they* believe to surround them . . . by learning the names of these powers; by learning the name of the experience of one's encounter with these powers.

But now that I have established the paradigm of story as a name and a naming, let me offer a more particular explanation of how it works for the child. I'll develop this same paradigm, by further reference to the same rich source by which I came to understand it: the Book of Genesis and the Hebrew notions of language implied in the creation narratives of chapters one, two, and three.

## *The Writing of "Branta"*

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"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" . . . by speaking them. Recognize an elemental simplicity in this Hebraic record of creation: the divine utterance ("Let there be light") did not command, as if the light itself were a separate entity, capable of obedience; nor did the divine word design light or else manufacture light (in which case God's word and the light would be separate things, one the subject, the other its object). No: the word *was* the light! They were one and the same thing, "Light" and the light. So if, for example, a child were asked what the act of creating must have looked like, she might picture the holy mouth of God opening wide, then issuing forth a beam of universal light exactly as a song might go forth from the mouth of God into all the universe.

But the language of stark creation was only one of the languages which the Creator used. There are two kinds of divine talk remembered in Genesis, for what God had made he also *named*. Light and its temporal period he called "day." Its dimming and the period of its absence he called "night." The firmament he called "heaven," the dry land "earth," the gathered waters "seas," and so forth.

Now, it is of crucial importance to understand that this naming did more than associate a particular sound with a particular thing (as modern societies use names as pointers merely, signs not much different from highway signs: *Chicago, 120 miles*. The highway sign isn't *actually* Chicago, of course: it says, "Chicago is that-a-way.") God's naming did more than produce the "word" by which speakers could refer to the object represented by that name. For the Hebrews, language was always an *action*. To speak was to accomplish. And to name a thing was actually to affect the thing named: it finished its creation, as it were, in three distinct ways.

First, the thing which is, but is not named, cannot be known. If you can't talk about it, neither can you think about it or consider it or meditated upon it—nor, in consequence, can you know it at all! For the Hebrews, language is the stuff of knowing. Only when the created thing takes its place in language does it fully enter the realm of human awareness.

To name a thing, therefore, is to clothe it in visibility. To name a thing is to make it knowable, to grant it place in the human conception of the world. It *seems* suddenly to appear, that which had in fact existed before its appearing. (But this concept is not restricted to the Hebrews. Most primitive cultures took time and tremendous pains to discover the *true* name of a child in order to present that child truly to the world—and to itself!)

Second, that which is granted a name is thereby joined to the whole "grammar" of existence. As words are joined to words in the structure of a sentence, so any single thing named stands in a living and relational union—stands in a sweet



kinship—with every other named thing in the universe. And as one word may enjoy an infinite variety of grammatical relationships, sentence to sentence, speech to speech; as the *changings* of relationship indicate the healthy flow of its life, so the thing named (or the person named) may enjoy the development of countless relationships to the grand creation of God.

Finally, third, the name of a thing also contained the purpose and the value of that thing. It offered continually a *why*, a reason for this thing's participation in the fullness of creation. (Recall Jacob's new name, "Israel," and its effect on the man himself, changing his character, announcing his new purpose as a "Striver With God." "Israel" next became the name of a nation, God's chosen, holy nation: "A kingdom of priests to me," says the naming God in Exodus 19:6.) If the second effect of naming was to place it into the *space* of the world, this third effect places it into the *time* of the world, making it active, defining characteristic goals to be accomplished in the future. The named thing is an esteemed thing, for that it *serves* the whole.

And when God had created everything; and when the Lord God had assessed all things as "Good, very good"; and when humankind, in the image of the Creator, had been set as steward in the midst of all good things, then God granted unto us . . . not the first and primal tongue, to create out of nothing, but rather the second significant tongue: to name! And in naming to accomplish all three of the above effects upon the things and the people named.

So Adam was invited to name the animals, bringing them fully into his own knowing, establishing relationships with them and for them, discovering and applying purpose to them: domesticating them.

But the highest thing the human could ever name was . . . another human. And so Adam and Eve do in the naming come to "know" each other, weave complex relationships with each other, affirm purpose and worth one upon the other:

Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;

She shall be called *ishshah* [woman]  
because she was taken out of *ish*. [man]

The Hebrew words *ishshah* and *ish* make the same sort of pun that the English words *woman* and *man* do: one word acts as a root for the other, longer word; while the shorter word needs the longer one for fulfillment. Man and Wo-Man need each other: both the names, the bare words, and the objects named.

Now, then, the application of my paradigm: It is precisely this sort of naming that the story *is* for the feelings of children. The whole story—its full experience from

## *The Writing of "Branta"*

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"Once upon a time" to "happily ever after" — becomes the name of some previously nameless and shapeless trouble truly encountering children's lives, a scary thought or mood discovered even within themselves, the fear suffered at natural transitions, leaving home, going to school, finding a new baby in their houses, fearing abandonment by their parents . . . .

The story helps children to know what otherwise would lurk in the unknowable regions of their dark souls, or of the dark world. (This is what the "robber" story accomplished for me, giving my personal encounters with evil in the abstract a local habitation and a name.)

The story establishes effective, useful, healthy relationships with things now given shape. (Remember the rules young Wally understood to exist between himself and the robber—as well as the important relationships he, as the eldest, experienced with his family.)

The story even gives the children purpose and value, valor and strength and goodness and worth. (Hard as the responsibility was, I could nonetheless act as the savior of my family: I, I kept them alive!)

Now, therefore, what should we not tell stories about? What should we, therefore, *not* name for the sake of the children? Should we skip departures temporal? Departures mortal? Should Maurice Sendak not have given a name and a shape to the Wild Things of the child's fervid imagination? And if he had not, what would that child have missed? Should *Branta and the Golden Stone* completely compromise this business of evil actions in beloved people (her father's selfish misuse of the Golden Stone)? Should *Branta* ignore the dyings that make us sad—and also, then, the sacrifice of love that makes us glad and good again?

The stories that contain badness are not bad stories. Rather, they are among some of the best. Because the story-teller who loves the children and gives the whole of his or her self to them by means of the tale, inviting at the same time the whole of the children's selves, is of all people the best able to confront true and truly terrible things *with* the children. The story-teller takes their hands and companions them into the future framed within the story, into the future awaiting them outside the story.

The story-teller who can name otherwise amorphous fears, does at the same time name the children! Knows them. Helps them to know their selves. Gives *them* place in the whole wide world. Persuades *them* of their value and purpose and strength and goodness and glory. Each may be, you see, a little Israel, if only the name has once become their experience.

So I wrote *Branta and the Golden Stone* with the hope of causing in children a love for Branta herself, by which love to identify with her—to dwell within her.

Branta should carry both bad and good into the children's experience; should name bad as bad, and good as good, and every child as loving of many things and filled with remarkable powers.

Branta knows loneliness in the extreme. So do children.

She has seen dying, and she had encountered the consequences of sin and greed and pride. A hard life? Yes, but no harder than the nightmares and the apprehensions of little children. And also as hard as life shall surely yet be for them.

But this is fantasy. This is the way children already think. And children distinguish between the experience of "playing at" something and the experience that forces itself upon them. They have control over fantasy! They can enter it just as far as they are prepared to experience it, and no farther. It is only as "real" as their hearts want to engage reality; otherwise, it's only a story. And the crossing of these boundaries is made possible and powerful when a loving, trusted adult journeys with them, an arm around them, telling the tale or else reading the tale together.

### **Conclusion: Grasshoppers**

Our son Matthew, at six and seven dreamed horrible dreams. He would start from sleep, fly from his bedroom down the hall, then bullet his little body into *our* bed, eyes as wide as boiled eggs.

We could smell the fear on him, for it caused his sweat to sour.

"What, Matthew? What is it?" his mother would gently ask.

And he: "Grasshoppers!"

It was a recurring nightmare: grasshoppers lurked at the bottom of a hole in his pillow. Insects huger than himself. They bit, he said, "Sideways," and clacked when they did. They were waiting for the time he would fall down the shaft to their lair, where they would tear himself apart for supper.

Three choices presented themselves to us, his parents.

But I had too strong a memory of my own childhood to make my mother's choice. No one would say to our son, "Oh, Matthew, don't be silly. There are no grasshoppers anywhere near your pillow."

The crossing of these boundaries is made possible and powerful when a loving, trusted adult journeys with them, an arm around them, telling the tale or else reading the tale together.

## *The Writing of "Branta"*

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On the other hand, I was probably still enough of the child myself to make the second choice: in a sense, I believed him.

Well, I began to dream my own dream, in which Matthew and I are walking over an endless field of grass, bright green, too extremely green to be safe. Matthew worms his hand out of mine and dashes ahead. "Wait!" I cry. "Matthew, wait!" I cry with a deep parental dread of the dangers ahead of him. And sure enough, all at once he vanishes from my sight. He has, I know, fallen into the hole of *his* dream. I rush forward. I find the hole. I see him falling—and I see, at the bottom, the grasshoppers of the Apocalypse waiting to eat him, and now I am in unspeakable anguish for my son. Should I jump after him? Should I return for help? I wake up.

My wife made the third choice, the still more excellent way.

One night, having calmed him down, Thanne took her son's hand and walked back to his bed. She sat beside him on the bed and asked for the details of those grasshoppers again. Matthew recounted them, whispering, terrified to mention them in their own hearing.

When he was done, Thanne said, "Is this the pillow?"—touching the one he slept with.

"Yesssss . . . ."

"Ah," she said, nodding in solemn agreement. "But," she said, "Matthew, did you know that grasshoppers, they are finicky?"

"Nooooo . . . ."

"Yes. Grasshoppers live in only one kind of pillow. This kind of pillow," she said, taking his from the bed. "Come with me," she said, and again she took his hand. She led him to a large garbage can in the kitchen, and there she stuffed the pillow good and gone forever.

Next, she got him a different sort of pillow, in which, she assured him, grasshoppers wouldn't be caught dead.

Too, taking advantage of the opportunity, she removed all the toys he took with him to bed.

You see? Thanne companioned him into his story. She accepted its premises, but not its present ending. She assumed the role of the story-teller and thereby led her son through the terrible (and terribly true) terrain of the tale even unto a marvelous ending. Thanne uttered the whole of the name of the spirit that had come to wrestle my son night after night, to wrestle him in his solitude. So Matthew learned the night spirit's name as well. He took power over the demon.

And he never dreamed of grasshoppers again.†

## The Gift of Global Song to the Congregation

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***B**e joyful in the Lord, all you lands; serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song.  
(Psalm 100:1)*

The psalmist declares that it is appropriate that all lands can and should be “joyful in the Lord, serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song” (Psalm 100:1). But *whose* song shall be sung? Every land and people has its own music, its own language and its own worship experience. Do I sing only my song and you sing only yours? *Should I* sing your songs? *Could* you sing my songs? Is it possible for all these songs to become *our* songs which we would sing together as we come into God's presence? If so, what does the church musician need to know in order to incorporate these global songs into the body of music sung by the congregation? What benefits may be expected as a result of using music from all lands as we join together to praise and serve the Lord with joy?

## **Concept of Global Music Within the Church's Historical Development**

In the early work of missionaries among cultures other than their own, it was common practice for well-intentioned missionaries to impose their own worship music and style upon the native people. As the local culture was suppressed, it became a case of "I'll sing my song and you'll sing it with me." The worship service of the mission church was based upon the previous worship experiences of the missionaries. Missionaries were simply using what was familiar and sacred to them as they endeavored to make God's Word known. They had no concept of using global music within the church.

Today we address the issue of singing global music within the church armed with greater knowledge and resources. This broader perspective has come about because of the advances in communication and transportation which have made our world seem smaller. The cultures of people have changed over the years as they have gradually absorbed from neighboring cultures what was thought to be helpful and useful. As access to the world has increased, so has the access to and use of its music from all places.

This access to and inclusion of new music from other cultures can be traced through the introductions of selected Lutheran hymnals. The *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958) stated in its "Preface to the Liturgy":

The Common Liturgy is rooted in the developed worship of the ancient and medieval Christian Church, both East and West, and grounded on the historic German, Scandinavian and American uses of the Western Hemisphere. Prepared especially for the use of Lutherans in the Western Hemisphere. . . In the section "Music of the Liturgy," it is pointed out that three distinct musical traditions are

*Should I sing your songs? Could you sing my songs'? Is it possible for all these songs to become our songs which we would sing together as we come into God's presence? If so, what does the church musician need to know in order to incorporate these global songs into the body of music sung by the congregation?*

reflected in the liturgy: plainsong (Roman), chorale (German) and the English chant. (Commission on Liturgy and the Hymnal, viii)

This hymnal was authorized by, and thus drew together, eight Lutheran church bodies of diverse ethnic backgrounds. It was used by about two-thirds of American Lutherans.

In 1965, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod invited other North American Lutheran churches to join together in working on a new hymnal. The Inter-Lutheran Commission which formed a year later included the Lutheran Church in America, The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Slovak), the American Lutheran Church, and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. When the Slovak church merged with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod soon afterward, the Slovak church was replaced by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada. The compilers of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) declared in its introduction that they had

worked for an equitable balance among hymns of the various Lutheran language traditions, while acting on the premise that most North American Lutherans no longer regard themselves as transplanted Europeans. The Anglo-American hymn tradition is given, therefore, a rightful and large place. More early American tunes are included than in previous hymnals; fewer late nineteenth-century English tunes are included. (Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, 8)

The *Lutheran Book of Worship* became the hymnal of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America which was formed when the American Lutheran Church joined with the Lutheran Church in America.

*With One Voice* (1995), a Lutheran resource for worship, was intended to serve as a supplement to the principle book of worship used in weekly worship. Its "Introduction" points out another focus: that "the 'one voice' of the Church represents an amazingly diverse fabric, many songs of many cultures in many styles, woven together by the one Spirit." While *With One Voice* provides only a sampling of songs, communities are encouraged to "cultivate a variety of expressions when they gather, rather than dividing themselves by styles of worship or music" (Seltz & Stoldt, 1995, p. 4).

As one looks at the different vision statements from these three hymnals, one can observe that each was striving to encompass a greater variety of sources for both text and music than found in previous hymnals. This was partially due to the gradual broadening of the ethnic makeup of American Lutherans. Inclusion of text and music from other cultures allows one to reach past the local congregation to claim a more active membership in the world church. This unity in Christ adds a richness and often an exuberance to worship. It broadens the definition of community to include the

## *The Gift of Global Song to the Congregation*

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world; it expands the concept of brothers and sisters in Christ and gives a stronger identity with those living in different cultures.

### **Philosophical Issues in the Use of Global Music**

The answer to the query of *whose* song to sing now seems simple when it is established that there may be benefits from singing your song in addition to my song. We can sing all songs! But there is a question of ethics to answer: *Should I* sing your song?

Throughout history the western world has often dominated other parts of the world, taking for themselves what was deemed of value. Today the United States is often viewed as an imperialistic world power with foreign policy based on self-interest and the desire for power. If I sing your song, am I taking it from you in the same imperialistic way? The many dimensions of this issue were addressed by Karen M. Ward in November, 1998 at an ELCA Conference on Worship in Orlando, Florida:

Sharing across denominational or cultural lines must be done with care, integrity, and respect, and the given culture must be understood in a more than superficial way. Care must be taken that the cultural traditions of others are not used for entertainment value, to satisfy curiosity, to remedy perceived “boredom,” or to make half-hearted attempts at inclusivity.

True cross-cultural sharing is motivated by the desire to know and love Christian brothers and sisters from other cultures. We share in each others [sic] cultures in worship as a means of embracing the people of that culture and to gain new insights into the Gospel. God calls us into *koinonia* with our brothers and sisters in Christ from various cultures and not into *koinonia* with cultures and cultural components extrapolated from those who embody them.

This issue may then be resolved partially by rephrasing the action to: If you *offer* your song, then it becomes a *gift* which I *receive*. The fact that the song has indeed been offered to others by the songwriter or those within its culture cannot always be documented. In the case of the Christian song with the original ethnic text and tune, it is hoped that the song carries a blessing for use by the entire Christian community (Bangert, 1995, p. 4).

When global song becomes the gift, the receiver must also accept new responsibilities along with the song. The recipient of any gift must always express thanks for that gift. In the case of global song, gratitude is best expressed in the way the music is shared with and used by the congregation. The music, as well as the culture it represents, must be treated with respect. Behind this music are hundreds, perhaps thousands of years of tradition. This music provides a window into another



part of the world and can promote a new awareness and better understanding of other people and their cultures.

Every culture has its own musical traditions regarding melody, rhythm and harmony in addition to the use of ethnic instruments. The original text, which may have begun in the oral tradition, is often in a language other than English. The thought of trying to be “authentic” in the musical style as well as using the original language easily becomes overwhelming. How *should* I sing that song? Am I even *able* to sing that song?

It is important to be aware of the context within which the song has been sung because that information should affect how it can be used within the congregation. The original context in which a song is used by its people—how it is sung and accompanied, how it is

used within their lives, what its meaning is for the community—is part of that song’s identity. This idea is reflected in the phrase “Oh, you just had to be there . . .” which is often heard when someone is trying to describe a unique experience. When you are not there, it can be difficult to grasp all the aspects of context, even given the great strides in modern communication.

When global song becomes the gift, the receiver must also accept new responsibilities along with the song. In the case of global song, gratitude is best expressed in the way the music is shared with and used by the congregation. The music, as well as the culture it represents, must be treated with respect.

The informed church musician must determine which elements of the original context will work and be meaningful to his/her worshiping community.

However, the musician must also be aware that the context automatically changes when the song is sung in a different community or culture. Even when great effort is expended to make the performance as authentic as possible, the result heard is a “new song.”<sup>1</sup> This important realization acknowledges that there can be value in

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<sup>1</sup>Lorraine Brugh led a session at a global worship conference at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago in September, 1998 where she discussed Asian music

## *The Gift of Global Song to the Congregation*

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both the original song and in the new song. A song meaningful in one community will convey a message, although it may be different, to another one. It is the responsibility of the church musician to be sure that the global song is relevant to the singers and the congregation within its new context. Decisions regarding performance practice will also affect the ease with which this new song may be sung. However, once these choices have been made and any necessary adaptations made for the new context, *I can sing your song*. I will be able to sing it in a way that is meaningful to me and respectful of your culture.

Throughout all the choices that are possible, the composer or arranger and publisher must not lose sight of the original gift. If changes are made in text or tune, they should be documented. The church musician is then aware of such changes and can determine whether this alternate version of text or tune is appropriate for use within the congregation.

Making changes in melody or harmony based on western European music theory and practice or adding traditional four-part harmony should be avoided or at least approached with caution. The Liberian hymn, "Come, Let Us Eat" provides an example of changes made in harmonization from the original first recording. Carlton R. Young (1993) describes these alterations in the *Companion to the Methodist Hymnal*. He then continues with other suggestions for use.

The adaptation and harmonization in our present hymnal are by Leland Sateren from the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, 1978, number 214. It is difficult to find a more blatant recent example of the emasculation of an indigenous hymn. These performance suggestions will help restore the hymn's original qualities. Never use the keyboard harmonies provided. Sing in unison as a call-and response; add hand clapping and rhythm instruments. Sing the hymn in the offertory procession of the bread and wine; accompany with two handbells, F and C, on the downbeats of measures 1, 5, 9, and 13. The tune may also be sung as a two-part canon with entrances at two-measure intervals. (p. 292)

When changes are made, it is helpful to include rationale or reasoning for them. This perspective is beneficial to the church musician who must decide how this global song might best be used. Young includes these notes written by the translator, Jaroslav J. Vajda, concerning the text for the Czech carol "Rock-a-bye, my dear little boy" in the *Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal*:

I was, however, disappointed in the lightness of its content, pretending as it does

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and contextualization. The resulting "new song" concept was heard there.

to be sung by the maiden who composed the Magnificat. Wondering what kind of lullaby the mother of the Savior might have sung to “that holy thing” she had borne, [at the invitation of Carlton R. Young whom I met at the Hymn Society meeting in Fort Worth] I wrote a new text moving the content of the carol closer to a hymn while trying to keep the simplicity and intimacy of the traditional carol. (Young, 1993, 572)

Text can be changed purposefully, as indicated above, or inadvertently, either through an incorrect oral transmission or through a translation that diverges in meaning from the original text. Changes must be carefully considered because once the text or tune is published today, it becomes accessible to the world tomorrow.

## The Lutheran Liturgical Service and Global Music

One of the greatest gifts from Martin Luther was the restoration of the song to the people. In Luther’s German Mass, parts of the liturgy for Holy Communion were replaced with hymns which he wrote and which were sung in German by the people. These songs still filled a liturgical function within the service. Both the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *Lutheran Worship* include a chorale service in the tradition of Luther’s German Mass. Developing a liturgy based on ethnic music from around the world could simply be viewed as an extension of Luther’s bringing the song to the people. In this case, the people would be the people of the world, viewed as one international congregation.

In order to consider substituting parts of the Lutheran liturgical worship service with global songs, one must consider the traditional use and purpose of music within the liturgy. The key questions to ask include: What is “appropriate?” Is substitution allowed and what is deemed acceptable? The rubrics from the service settings for Holy Communion in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and Divine Service II in *Lutheran Worship* provide helpful guidelines for the different parts of the liturgy.

The liturgy which is the “work of the people” is intended to give the worship service its shape or plan of action. This design is not intended to be rigid, unchanging, or dull. Lutherans around the world share this tradition of liturgical worship. This framework helps bridge the communication gap from church to church, language to language, and culture to culture. That is why it is possible to worship in a liturgical service conducted in another language and yet to understand what is happening or what is even being said (Arletta Anderson, personal interview, June 9, 1999).

The church musician must determine how the liturgy can work best for the local congregation to worship God. The purpose of a liturgy with global songs is not to provide an exciting change (although it may do so) or to make the congregation

suddenly appear to be more inclusive' (although it may open up opportunities). The purpose of a liturgy with global songs is to worship God and to proclaim the gospel through different sounds and yet within a familiar framework. When global songs replace the traditional parts of the liturgy, these songs must still function within the liturgical context which follows the precedent of Martin Luther nearly five hundred years ago in the German Mass.

## **Strategies to Implement Global Song Within the Congregation**

Adding global songs to the hymn repertoire of the local congregation must be done intentionally. The church musician should be aware of available workshops on global music, engage in discussions and share resources with colleagues, and look in the community for experiences with ethnic music. An excellent immersion in global song and mission is offered by the yearly ELCA Global Mission Events held during the summer. Introduction of these new songs takes study and planning beforehand because that initial impression can quickly determine if the congregation will accept that gift of song.

While English is spoken in many countries around the world, the original language of a song may be different. The experience of singing in another language makes one appreciate the effort, as well as the ability, it takes to speak more than one language. Because Spanish, French, and German are taught in many high schools, songs in these languages may be easier to begin with. Music from the Taizé Community includes song in Latin which is regarded as a neutral language because it is not currently in use by any group of people. Languages may also be written phonetically to make them easier to use. A pronunciation guide for Swahili is found in *Set Free* by Howard Olson.

A hymn sung in the original language must be chosen with care because the purpose of singing to worship God remains unchanged. One option is to have the choir and song leader sing a verse in the foreign language followed by the congregation singing the rest in English. Singing songs with word repetition or singing only the refrain in the original language provides another option for success. Whenever something is sung in another language, the English translation should be readily available.

The number of arrangements of global music for vocal or instrumental use increases daily. The church musician needs to review the material to determine if this arrangement fits the needs of the musical ensemble and the congregation. The question of whether the arrangement represents the given culture with respect and not

just superficially must also be addressed. An instrumental or choir arrangement can preview a new song for the congregation or reinforce a global song already sung in a worship service.

Using global music with children is a necessity. They may already be meeting other children from different cultures in their classrooms. An appreciation, understanding, and acceptance of differences as well as similarities between traditions is critical. Help little children relate to the various countries by using a map and explaining some of the special things about that culture. Once you begin, they may share their knowledge, too.

Be sure to include movement with these global songs, especially ones from Africa. Adding rhythm instruments of various kinds adds sound and excitement. Passing out instruments to those who were singing is also a great incentive for older children to learn those words fast. Linking the rhythm parts to rhythms or words within the song helps children to participate comfortably. If you plan to teach an adult group or the entire congregation a song, such as “We Are Marching in the Light of God,” in the original language, teach it to the children first. It will give you practice, the children will forgive any stumbles, and they will learn it as fast or faster than the adults. If the song will then be used with children present, such as in a church service, the children can help lead those around them. Be sure the music does not stop with the children. Global music needs to be used with all ages.

Look for other opportunities to tie in a global song with an existing program. If a group is planning a kickoff meeting, such as Sunday School teachers for the coming year volunteer to lead global songs as they gather or during a break in their meeting. Find out if they are planning a special mission project and choose songs from that part of the world. If there will be a fellowship program with a travelogue, such as a senior citizens group, again be ready to lead a global song or two! With a group like this, you may discover all sorts of things—like who has been where and what they heard as well as who else can sing an ethnic song, perhaps learned from childhood (yes, a Norwegian song is global music). Be sure to encourage total involvement as you lead these songs—with instruments as appropriate, with movement when able, and always with lots of spirit!

Using global music with all ages throughout the church will enable them to sing “with gusto” in worship because they are now experienced in singing those songs. When the global repertoire has begun to build, the possibility of a global celebration service grows as well. This service cannot be overloaded with new, unfamiliar music, so planning ahead is essential. Also, remember that every song does not need to be from places outside of Europe and the United States. Global music is inclusive of music from the entire world.

## *The Gift of Global Song to the Congregation*

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Global song is indeed a gift from its original culture, but it is a gift that also keeps on giving in many ways. It is a gift that we give each other when we join together in worship. It is a gift that is shared outside of worship. It is a gift that connects us to God and at the same time to other Christians far away.

There are challenges today in receiving and in sharing that gift of song. The church musician must avoid the two extremes of “I don’t know enough to use it” and “I’ll use it my way.” Avoiding the use of global song is like hiding a gift of great value. Striving for perfect performance practice is wasted effort if the needs of the singer/congregation are not met. In planning, be sure the music reaches all ages.

The church musician needs to avoid tokenism when planning global music. Use African-American music on Sundays besides “Martin Luther King Sunday” or Latino music on other Sundays besides the day when a guest preacher from the Caribbean is present. Encourage multicultural awareness to extend beyond the worship service into other areas of the church. Support the work of other committees, such as the global mission committee. Look beyond the four walls of the home church to the world church beyond.

As children of God, we *should* sing that new song together even though we won’t be able to sing it in the exact same manner as its original singer. However, we can sing it in a meaningful way as that song becomes our offering to God. When God accepts this musical offering, it no longer is my song or *your* song or even *our* song. The song belongs to God who created us all and gifted us all with his song.

Over two hundred years ago, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who founded the first permanent Lutheran synod in North America, voiced hope for “one church, one book” (Stulken, 1981, p. 114). As hymnals have been developed, there have been mergers between Lutheran church bodies who were working together. Someday his dream of one church may be realized.

However, hymnals like the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *Lutheran Worship* are used mostly by American Lutherans of European descent. Several hymnals which

have been recently developed are directed toward serving the worship of other ethnic Americans. *Libro de Liturgia y Cantico* has been published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America especially for Latino congregations. *This Far by Faith*, developed by the ELCA and Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, is an African-American worship resource. Is this a step backward to the dictates of your song/your book and my song/my book? A study of these new hymnals shows that there are songs from all parts of the world. Traditional hymns, more contemporary songs, and global songs are included in addition to those from the particular ethnic culture. In spite of the different languages, it is still the same song.

The hope of Muhlenberg might be expressed better now as a dream for "one church, one song" or perhaps "a global church, a global song." As children of God, we *should* sing that new song together even though we won't be able to sing it in the exact same manner as its original singer. However, we can sing it in a meaningful way as that song becomes our offering to God. When God accepts this musical offering, it no longer is *my* song or *your* song or even *our* song. The song belongs to God who created us all and gifted us all with his song. It is the song that can connect the people to each other in the world church and to God, the creator of that song.✠

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## Taking Ethical Action as an Artist

*Gretchen Beck is director of the Art Department at Concordia University, Irvine, CA. She previously served for three years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger, West Africa, and taught art at an inner city art center in St. Louis, MO. She holds an M.F.A. and an M.A.A. from the University of Iowa and a B.A. from Valparaiso University.*

In his book *Faith Active in Love* (1954), George Wolfgang Forell defines Martin Luther's social ethics. He states that the primary principle of Luther's ethics is faith in the word of God. If a person of faith is saved through Christ, it is the faithful Christian who expresses moral acts. According to Luther, Christian ethics could not exist without people of faith. Forell writes, "It was Luther who insisted that the person precedes the act, that ethics is always the ethics of people, and that one cannot have moral acts apart from moral people" (p. 84). What is important to understand in this statement is that when an individual is justified through faith, Christian love is the result. Thus, Martin Luther explained, the creative act of faith is love.

If Christian love is the fruit of faith, how then does Luther define love? George Forell explains, "Now Luther defined Christian love as self-giving, spontaneous, overflowing as the love of God" (p. 98). The word "spontaneous" is important in Luther's understanding of love. Just as Christ's love for us is free and instinctive, so too should our love be for



others. The Christian who experiences God's love has the opportunity to give this love away because it is a gift from God.

Luther looked to the apostle St. Paul for support on this ethical principle. In Galatians 5:6, St. Paul states, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working in love." In this verse, St. Paul places the action of this principle in the word faith. A faith that is alive and that works in service to God can motivate the Christian to love and serve the neighbor. With this insight in mind, I will ask, "Do Christians today want to participate in this understanding of ethical action?" Martin Luther answers this question in his commentary on the book of Galatians,

"If faith without works justifies, then let us not do any works; but let us merely believe and do whatever we please!" "Not so, you wicked men," says Paul. "It is true that faith alone justifies, without works; but I am speaking about genuine faith, which, after it has justified, will not go to sleep but is active through

**Luther's teaching on ethical action is something that we can encourage each other to understand and participate in today. The Christian who feels God's presence in his or her life can be inspired to learn how to serve as a mediator who receives God's generous love and then in turn spontaneously gives this love away to others.**

love." As I have said, therefore, Paul is describing the whole of the Christian life in this passage: inwardly it is faith toward God, and outwardly it is love or works toward one's neighbor. (p. 30)

What we understand in this passage is that it is difficult to practice the paradigm that defines the Christian life. Yet Christ calls each of us to take an active stance in the world and serve as mediators between God and our neighbor. With all of the pressures of today's society, adopting this position takes a conscious effort. I believe that Luther's teaching on ethical action is something that we can encourage each other to understand and participate in today. The Christian who feels God's presence in his or her life can be inspired to learn how to serve as a mediator who receives God's generous love and then in turn spontaneously gives this love away to others.

## **The Artist and the Community**

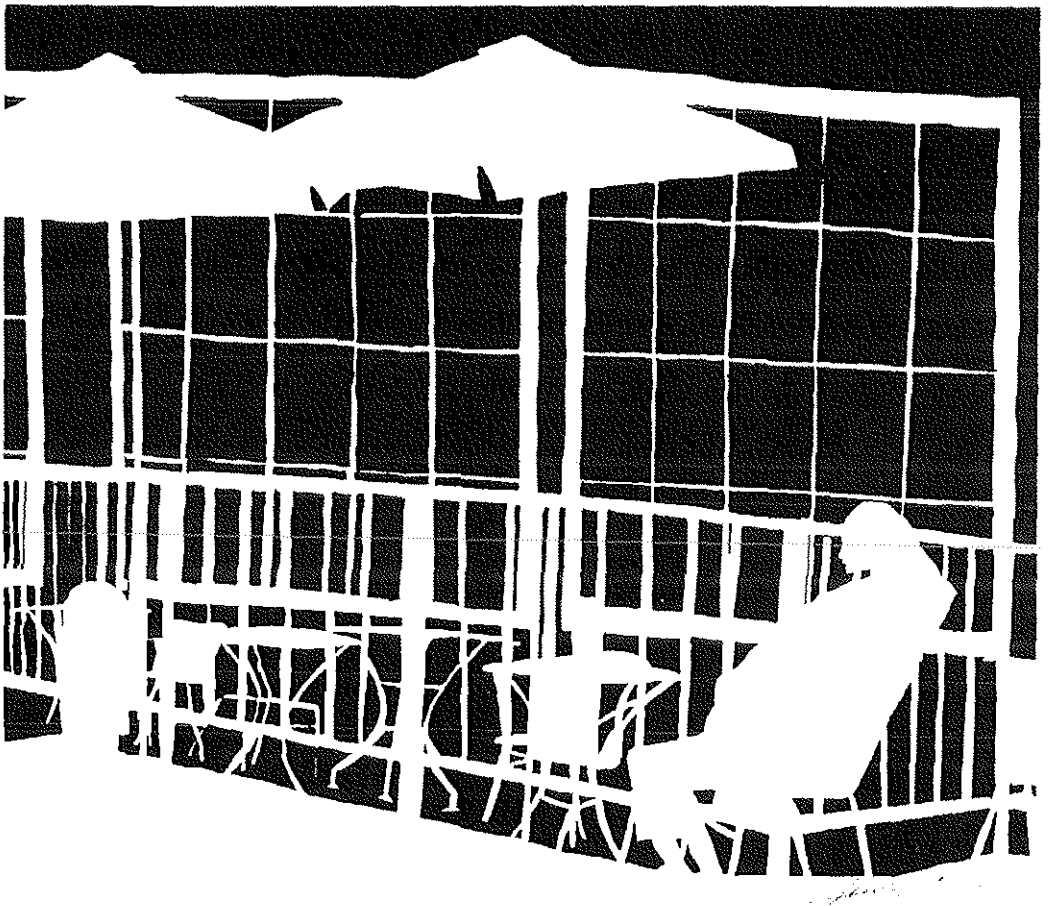
With Luther's social ethics in mind, I will discuss how an undergraduate art curriculum can encourage students to use art as a vehicle to act upon their Christian faith. In the art program that I will describe students learn that art can play an instrumental role in their lives and the environment in which they live. The word "instrumental" in this case means that art serves as a tool that leads to a form of action (Wolterstorff, 1980, p. 14). For example, students in this program might be inspired to produce images as a means to reach out to their neighbor or they might be encouraged to study a particular artist to learn about issues of cultural diversity. Thus, my position is that it is the utility of art that leads students to discover the meaning that exists within the images they produce.

Art that generates action is alive in the classroom and in the community at Concordia University in Irvine, California (CUI). In the art classes that I teach at CUI, students spend a considerable amount of time engaged in the artistic process, where they are encouraged to think about the content and the intention of their work. They are inspired to see themselves as visual communicators who know why they are making certain images or are interested in a particular subject matter. Once the students have completed a particular project, the images are then exhibited in a public place. The hope behind creating exhibitions for the campus community is that the art will inspire an audience to understand the students' intentions. Here viewers can begin to see how the students have thought about issues of faith and service in the artwork that they have produced. Thus, through a study of art that leads to ethical action, future artists will be encouraged to produce images that serve both Christ and society.

By examining a series of projects that my students at CUI have produced, we can understand how Luther's teachings on ethics relate to this undergraduate art program. The experience of inspiring students to act upon their faith begins in the *Drawing I* class by encouraging them to understand themselves in relationship to the world around them. This process takes place through a semester-long drawing project. For this study, the students in the *Drawing I* course adopt a person or a place that they investigate and draw over the course of the semester. This project allows beginning drawing students to discover the techniques that they enjoy in order to create expressive drawings. The students also learn that they can use drawing as a tool to develop relationships with the different people and places that fill their immediate surroundings.

Junko Ikeda, a first-year art major who was a student in this course last fall, chose to adopt a local coffee shop close to the CUI campus where Junko often spends time with her friends. To create the drawings, Junko wanted to understand how

Americans occupy a sense of space in a public setting. Over the course of the semester she learned that she enjoyed creating negative space drawings with India ink. By drawing these images, she rediscovered a part of her Japanese culture called *ma*. In Japanese the word *ma* is similar to the idea of negative space; however, this understanding of space is not empty, rather, it is full of nothing. Junko explained that in Japanese culture the absence of something is often as important as something that exists. By spending time at this public place, Junko visually captured a part of her own culture and also learned how different people spend their time in a public gathering place. Engaging students in projects that lead them to ask, "What is my relationship to the world around me?" is the first part of the artistic process that I am describing (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Pen and Ink Drawing by Junko Ikeda

## *Taking Ethical Action as an Artist*

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We can also expose students to this question through the study of art history. In another project that I conducted in the fundamentals art course entitled *Experiences in Art*, the students studied the art of Romare Bearden. Bearden's use of color and pattern in his collages inspired the students to understand the African-American experience. For this particular project, a group of students in each section of the class created tableau art pieces based upon Bearden's collages. The groups produced a series of frozen scenes by constructing backdrops with scraps of material, acrylic paint, and large mural paper. They designed their own costumes and configured the action for their art pieces by studying Bearden's images.

One group chose to study Bearden's collage, *Watching the Good Trains Go By* (1964). In this image we see Bearden's fascination with the train, which he described as a "journeying thing." In this collage, the train represents the white culture's fleeting yet dominating presence in the black communities of North Carolina. Despite the influence of white culture, the strength of the African-American community endures in this image. This strength is found in the group of friends who gather at dusk to sing the blues as the trains pass by.

The students in this group related to the vitality of Bearden's figures in much the same way that they build community with each other on campus and in the classroom. They chose to highlight this aspect of Bearden's collage in their tableau. The rest of the class captured this scene as contour drawings. To complete this assignment I asked students to create collages from their drawings that would answer this question, "How will you integrate Bearden's world with your own understanding of community?" This question challenged many students in the class. We proceeded by discussing the artistic process that had developed so far. "How did Bearden's figures change when they moved from being in a collage to becoming real people in a tableau?" "Did the group that created the tableau replace Bearden's culture with their own?" By addressing these questions, the students came up with some original ideas that they used to create the collages for this assignment.

It is important to understand what is happening at this point within the artistic process. The primary goal behind this exercise was to lead a group of faith-minded students to think about their relationship to the African-American community. This goal parallels Martin Luther's teachings on ethical action, because he believed that ethics are based upon the principle that Christian people express their faith by serving their neighbor through acts of love. Luther explains St. Paul's views on this principle: "He makes love the tool through which faith works" (p. 29). Undergraduate art students can learn from this understanding of love by producing art that is accepting of their neighbors in spontaneous ways. Like designing a collage where different kinds of paper and textures feed off one another to make a unified

image, so too can Christian love stir up the creativity of young artists.

The collages that the students produced carried unique messages. In his collage entitled, *You Are the Same* (2000), Kei Motohashi chose to use Wrigley's chewing gum wrappers as a way to promote acceptance for all people. While working on this project, Kei related to Romare Bearden's belief that art should be created for everyone. Thus, Kei's figures represent a community of people who live in a world where skin color does not exist (Figure 2).

In another section of the same class, the group of students who created the tableau art piece chose to study Bearden's collage entitled *Evening Meal of the Prophet Peterson* (1964). Bearden's use of cut-out pictures from magazines intrigued the students. In this picture, one of Bearden's families eats dinner together, while three white men including Santa Claus gaze at the family. The students were disturbed by this part of the image, and decided to design a tableau that would be free of supervision. They were playful in the way they constructed the backdrop for this art piece. They used butcher-block paper as a means to reconstruct the fan that exists in Bearden's collage. A rectangle of tin foil served as the mirror in the dining room. Their carefree attitude reflects the same sense of improvisation that Bearden employed when he created the collage.

In response to this tableau, Becky Lehmann created a collage that depicts an African-American family eating together. Becky grew up in a multicultural neighborhood outside Los Angeles. "I don't ever remember being conscious of black and white distinctions as a child," she says. "My best friend in kindergarten was an African-American boy, and there never seemed to be anything odd or out of place with our camaraderie. I just knew that we were all created in God's image."

When Becky was creating her collage, her own background played a role in the process that she used to construct this art piece. Becky stated, "I was challenged to integrate my culture with Romare Bearden's. I looked at the experiences that Bearden and I shared and decided to focus on the family, which is an important theme in both of our lives." In Becky's collage, just as in Bearden's image, a family enjoys a meal together. To create the background of the picture, Becky integrated letters that she received from her family and friends after she moved away to college. By adding important words from people she cares about to the image, the idea of family became permanent in Becky's eyes.

So far in this discussion we have examined the artists' relationship to the world around them. We have reflected upon issues of self and cultural diversity in order to understand how we might creatively act upon our Christian faith. Has our action

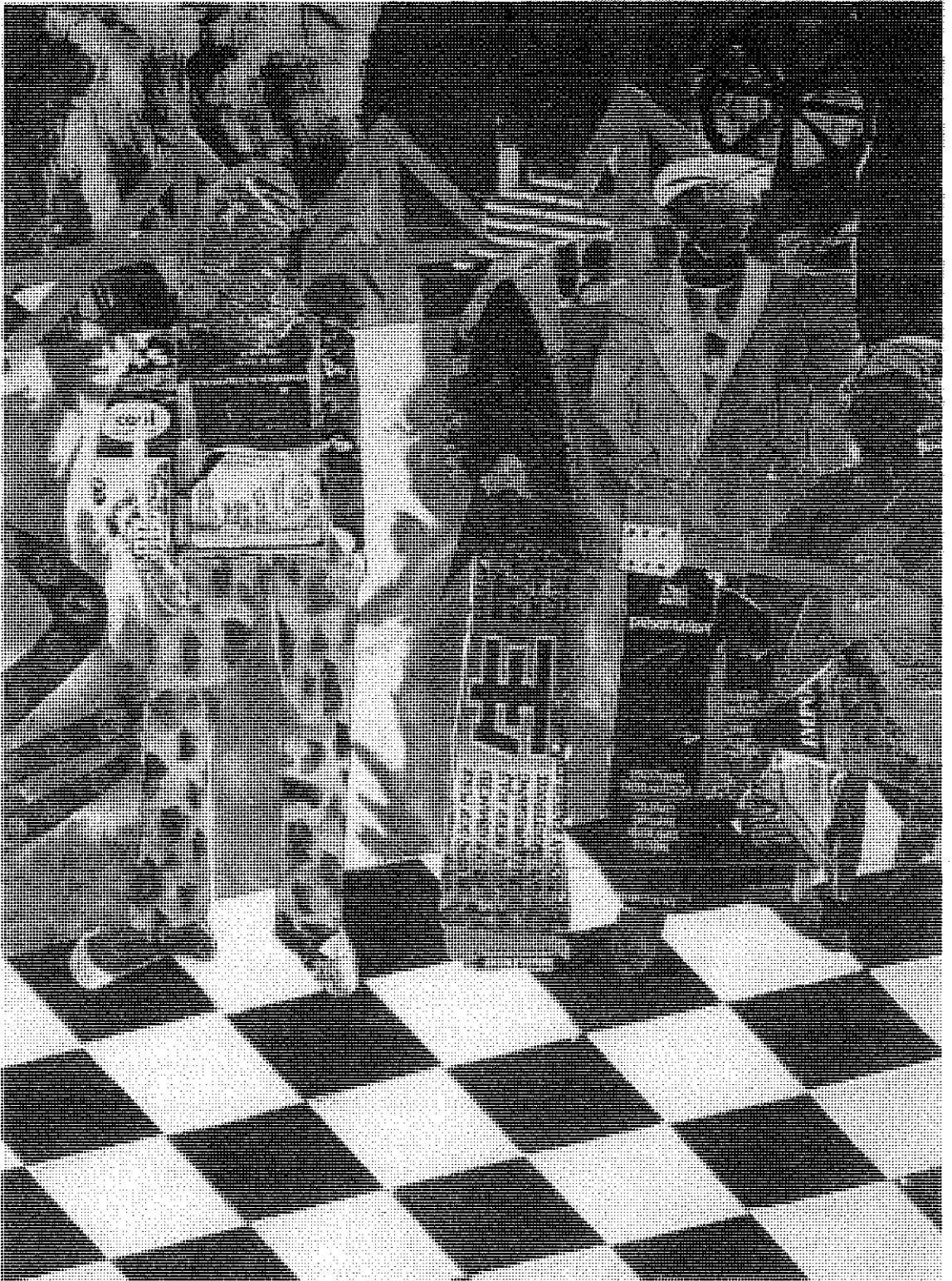


Figure 2: *Your Are the Same* by Kei Motohashi, Collage

generated an understanding of Christian love? I ask this question often in the art courses that I teach. The students, who have been a part of the artistic process that I have described so far, have developed a greater understanding of themselves. They discovered in several projects the experiences in life that they care deeply about. To act upon our Christian faith, however, we now need to step out of ourselves and ask the people around us questions in order to understand how art can serve as a means to respond to our neighbor.

### Art as a Response to Our Neighbor

To continue developing this educational experience, I asked Todd Eklund, a junior art major, if he would like to design an honors project as an independent study. After careful thought and consideration, Todd proposed a mural that would be based upon the theme of racial harmony. He started this project by conducting research on a series of street murals created by a variety of artists in Los Angeles. Roderick Sykes' mural entitled *Unity* served as an inspiration for Todd. As another form of research for this project, Todd wrote a letter to the students, faculty, and staff members of CUI, asking them to think about how racial harmony can be achieved today. Todd wanted his project to inspire people on campus to respond to this concern proactively. He received nearly one hundred responses. John Hoffman, the Dean of Students at CUI, stated,

Racism is more than something that individuals do to someone else. It goes much deeper. Racism has to do with unconscious ways that people think and live that send hidden messages that one way of living is better than another. I think the key to ending racism lies in the concepts of hope and agape love. Hope means that we keep trying even though we know that human nature will never achieve a truly harmonious society. Agape means that we learn to love all people and their differences even when they frighten or disgust us—in a sense we love our enemies. I have always thought that if everyone knew and loved other people of different races, we could all live in harmony and peace. Of course, it is not simple. I am finally beginning to catch glimpses of our human family as *one body* with infinite variations of physical appearance, personality, history, talents, interests, values, and circumstances. We all belong to groups chosen or imposed, and we are limited by every one of them. Our characteristics do not define us, nor do our successes and failures. We are so much more. We have been created in the image and likeness of God—*all of us*—and we are called to love each other in honor of our love for him.

Todd used responses like this to create *Declaration of Harmony* (2001), a 6'x 9' mural (Figure 3). In the painting, Todd emphasizes the primary colors in order to ask

his audience to "stop" and think about their relationship to one another. He goes a step farther and encourages his viewers to consider Christ's relationship to us.

Keeping the intention of the painting in mind, I ask, "Is Todd's mural a form of



**Figure 3:** *Declarations of Harmony* by Todd Eklund

ethical action?" By asking this question I am not suggesting that there is a formula or a guide to follow in order to create acts of love for a community of people. George Forell (1954) writes,

Although Luther had excluded all human merit in his explanation of the motivating principle of Christian ethics, he did not want to imply that this was to exclude good works from the Christian life. Christians were to be free from good works only if these works were understood as producing "work-righteousness." On the other hand, Luther insisted that a living faith expresses itself in works of love. (pp. 86-87)

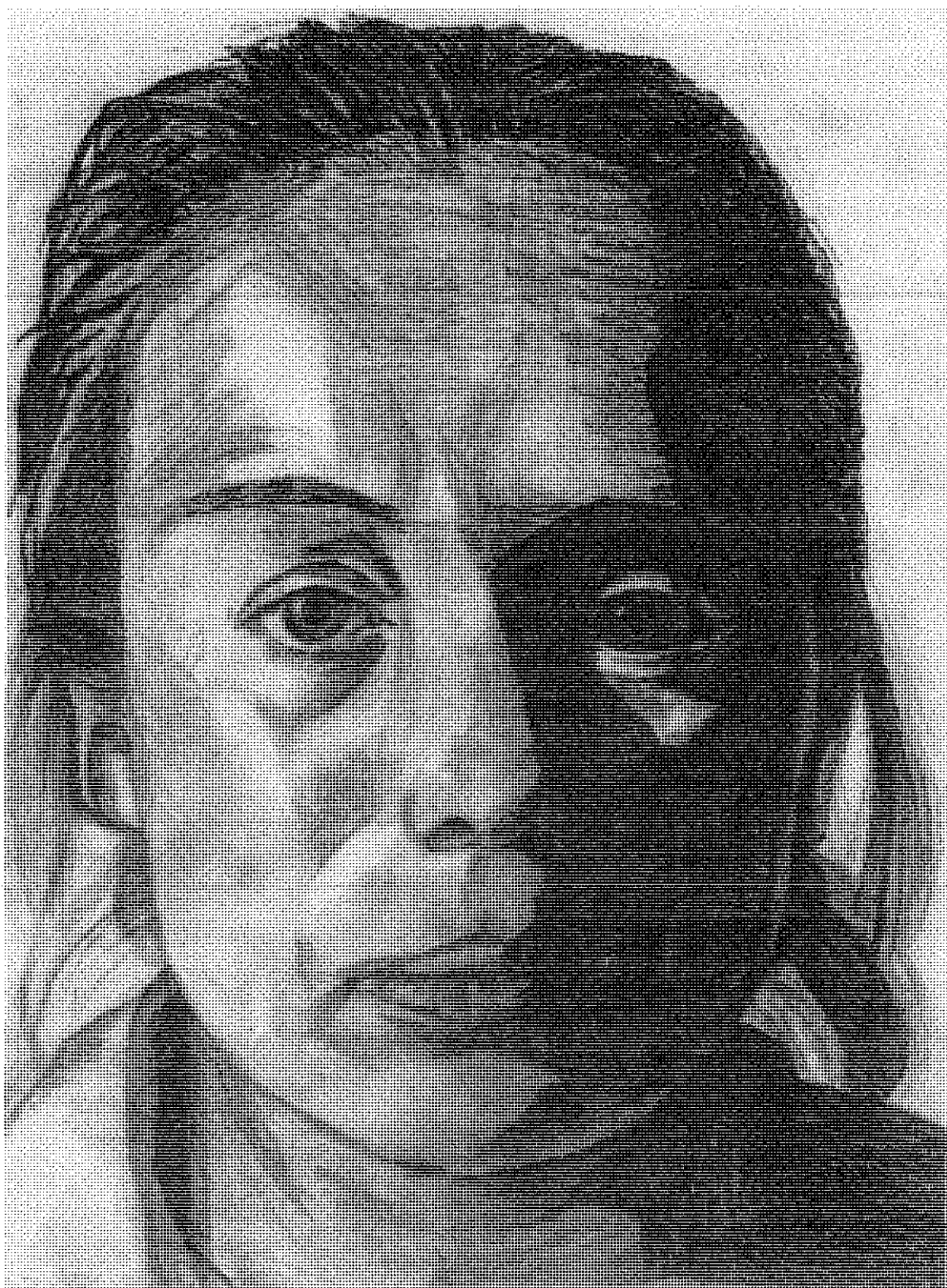


Rather, I believe that an art student like Todd can learn something very valuable from Luther's thoughts on social ethics. His mural stirred up within a community of people a sense of how cultural understanding can be accomplished today. The participants responded to this concern freely and openly. Todd then produced an image that encourages people to live and work in unity with each other. Thus, the faithful Christian believes it is his or her responsibility to be of service to the immediate community. And it is this action, continually at work in helping others, that is pleasing to God.

After examining this mural project, do we now need to take a break from the world and the challenges that it presents to us? Will we draw into ourselves as a way of rejuvenating our creativity to carry out a sense of Christian vocation? Or is our faith strong enough to carry us forward so that we can continue to reach outward toward our neighbor? To answer these questions, we will look at the self-portraits that the German artist Kaethe Kollwitz created during the 1930's when she was a victim of discrimination by the Nazis.

During this period Kollwitz was no longer able to create images that carried political messages, so she turned to herself as a subject to depict universal themes about human suffering. When I shared these self-portraits with my printmaking students, we talked about using Kollwitz's drawings as references to create a social commentary project. For this assignment, the students were asked to choose a social concern that they felt strongly about and that they could respond to by creating a series of relief prints. To begin, I asked the students this question, "What social concerns do you notice on a daily basis on Concordia's campus?" Some students in the course talked about their friendships with the maintenance staff. There was a general feeling among the students that the maintenance staff was a group of hard working and caring individuals. The students decided that they would like to recognize Graciela Flore, a staff member who faithfully cleans the art department. In order to thank Graciela for the tremendous amount of work that she does for the art department and the university as a whole, the students decided to create a group portrait of her. The idea thrilled Graciela.

The students in the class then produced a series of value studies by drawing Graciela from life (Figure 4). Although the decision to focus on the maintenance staff came from the majority of the class, the students who voted for another project objected to drawing Graciela. "Why do we have to draw her?" several students asked. Drawing an everyday person challenged the students' idea of who can pose as a model for a studio art class. For this group of students, a model was someone as a model for a studio art class. For this group of students, a model was someone who



**Figure 4:** *Graciela* by Junko Ikeda

posed for a living and not someone who cleaned the art department.

For this project, the role of the instructor is to encourage every student to see why recognizing one's neighbor through an exercise such as this is important. Forell (1954) writes, "The application of Luther's ethical principle made all service of God, if carried out in this world, service of the neighbor. Luther repeatedly emphasized that God does not need our deeds of mercy but our neighbor does" (p. 109). This is not a law; rather it is through the love that Christ gives to us that the faithful Christian will want to respond to her neighbor. Applying this principle to the art-making process is a challenging concept for undergraduate art students to understand. I must continually be prepared for students to resist parts of the artistic process that I am describing. At the same time, I want to allow them to see that the pathway we travel along is wide enough for them to have a distinct voice and to encourage each of them to carve out their own course.

To complete the group portrait project, the students completed several preliminary drawings and then studied a variety of carving techniques that they



Figure 5: *Graciela* by Tetsu Naito

practiced by cutting lines of various widths and lengths in linoleum blocks. The class was now ready to print a series of images (Figure 5). At this stage in the process the students who previously objected to the project began to enjoy working together on this art piece. Carolina Rodriguez, who served as the leader of the project, decided that the group portrait should be printed in shades of mimeograph blue:

When I was in elementary school, the L.A. Unified School District printed the students lunch tickets with dark blue ink. The children who were a part of the reduced meal program received lunch tickets that were printed on

## *Taking Ethical Action as an Artist*

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bright yellow paper. The students who paid full price for their lunches received the same color of lunch ticket; however, their tickets were printed with different numbers. Both of the lunch tickets were printed with the same bold blue ink. The significance of this color for me is that all the students in the lunch line were treated exactly the same. Everyone was able to eat and no one was ridiculed because they were carrying a different color of lunch ticket. This is why I wanted to use the color mimeograph blue in this portrait project. Even though Graciela's culture and class might be different than other students in our class, we can still learn to accept and appreciate each other.

The maintenance department often talks about the group portrait. They refer to the project as a symbol of the caring attitude that they share with the students at CUI. This experience enabled the students to value and appreciate people they might otherwise take for granted. When faith is active, Christian love becomes responsive, reaches out to the neighbor, and serves the community as a whole.

### **The Artist and World Cultures**

In the examples of student art that we have discussed so far, we can see that giving students the opportunity to discover the creative part of themselves in order to cultivate a world-view is important. The course we have traveled has enabled students to create art as a means to love their neighbors in hopeful and responsive ways. Are we now ready to step out of ourselves and beyond the campus community in order to understand another culture?

Martin Luther writes,

But here stands Paul in supreme freedom and says in clear and explicit words:

"That which makes a Christian is faith working through love." He does not say:

"That which makes a Christian is a cowl or fasting or vestments or ceremonies."

But it is true faith toward God, which loves and helps one's neighbor—

regardless of whether the neighbor is a servant, a master, a king, a pope, a man, a woman, one who wears purple, one who wears rags, one who eats meat, or one who eats fish. (p. 31)

From this passage we can understand that Luther believed that the neighbor is anyone. The individual could be a family member, a close friend, the woman who cleans the art department, or a small child who lives in West Africa. With this understanding of the neighbor, art students can learn that Christian love can break down boundaries that exist between people of different cultures. And they can also learn to produce art that celebrates the traditions of people who are less fortunate than they are.

As the primary instructor of this art curriculum, I believe it is my role to introduce to students how my own Christian faith has allowed me to serve my neighbor as an artist. By working for three years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger, West Africa, and by

teaching art at an inner city art center in St. Louis, I learned how to act creatively upon my faith by working in two impoverished areas of the world. Through these experiences, I was able to understand how art could be used as a vehicle to reach out to under-served people. Thus, as an art instructor, I see myself as a

facilitator who can help students understand themselves, so that they too can begin to notice and empathize with different parts of humanity.

To understand how art can reach out to another culture, I would like to discuss an African Textile Installation that was created in collaboration with more than sixty students for the 1999 Christmas concert at CUI. The project started by having the students study the textiles of the Djarma, Fulani, and Wodaabe people of Niger, West Africa. The students learned that Nigerians who live in rural communities often own just two pieces of clothing. They wear one article of clothing to work and sleep in, and save the other ensemble for festive occasions.

The textiles that the Djarma women wear are imported to Niger from coastal countries such as the Ivory Coast and Senegal. The "fast wax" fabrics that display intricate and colorful patterns are often printed in Belgium and Holland. Older married Djarma women wear one long piece of this fabric to work in daily. The dress has a slit in it for the woman's neck and the rest of the material is then wrapped around her body. Younger women and girls choose ensembles made out of fast wax material that consists of an appliqued blouse and a wraparound skirt.

The students also studied the influence of Islam on the textiles of the Fulani people. Traditionally, Fulani men weave together geometric patterns to create colorful wedding blankets. Since the country of Niger no longer grows cotton, there are fewer weavers in the rural Nigerien communities, so many of the wedding blankets found in the local markets are imported from Nigeria. Married Fulani

With this understanding of the neighbor, art students can learn that Christian love can break down boundaries that exist between people of different cultures. And they can also learn to produce art that celebrates the traditions of people who are less fortunate than they are.

## *Taking Ethical Action as an Artist*

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women wear the long wraps of material to the market, to weddings, name givings, and other celebrations.

We also discussed the imagery that is found in the embroidery of the Wodaabe people. The symbolism that is found in the small-embroidered images intrigued the students. For example, a group of small circles clustered together symbolize a village of people living together. Slender lines crossed multiple times represent sleeping children. Men and women, young and the old, wear the embroidered clothing that the Wodaabe people create. The Wodaabe people wear the ornate textiles daily and also for special occasions such as the annual dances at the end of the rainy season.

After studying the different textiles, the students then produced their own designs by creating monochromatic acrylic paintings. The paintings were integrated into seven eighteen-foot panels, which were then installed in the CUI chapel. The installation served as a valuable cultural and educational experience for the students who were involved in the project. Throughout this study, I asked the students to think about several important concepts. For example, "How is a culture's clothing an art form?" Many students' understandings of art were stretched when they learned that textiles play a functional role in much of the third world. It was only by creating their own individual designs that they realized that art can serve a distinct purpose for a culture of people.

By experiencing this part of Nigerien culture, the students began to appreciate the people who make and wear the textiles. A few of the students were engaged with the hearts of a people who work very hard simply to survive. Forell (1954) writes, "Yet God desires that the Christian take his full responsibility in the world" (p. 151). The art students who were involved in this textile project simply tasted a part of God's plan for them through this experience. Hopefully, this study will not be a single effort that the students completed once they finished the installation. Perhaps this project can serve as a starting point for students to create art as a means to expand their global consciousness and to continue to relate to people from different cultures.

My sincere hope for undergraduate art students who engage in the courses I described is that they will choose to serve humanity as future artists. Through faith, artists can support their neighbors and communities by engaging in acts of love that are hopeful, responsive, and enduring. Forell (1954) states, "The Christian acts in society because he knows that it is the living community that God wants to be served" (p. 111). With this understanding of the Christian vocation young artists can reach out to others as a means to transform society.✠

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## Telling the Good News About Jesus in the Year of the Child

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Mother's or Father's Day won't pass in our household without the same question posed by one of our five children every year: "Why isn't there ever a kid's day?" They cannot help but notice the special attention doled out to Mom and Dad on that Sunday set aside in May or June—maybe breakfast in bed, out to eat after church, cards, gifts—it is almost like an extra birthday party. "Why is there never a Sunday for kid's day?" they wonder. We have the standard reply ready. Have you used it yourself? When they ask, "Why isn't there ever a kid's day?" we respond, "Everyday is kid's day."

Indeed, the entire year 2001 is declared "The Year of the Child" in our Church. Everyday really is kid's day—the whole year devoted especially to children. This essay centers on young people as we connect "The Year of the Child" to our convention theme, "Tell the Good News about Jesus." Youth should have special attention. Let's dole it out. Not breakfast in bed, or out to eat after church, but rather the nurture that the Church extends to its children



through Word and Sacrament. It is a precious gift like no other—the good news about Jesus. Tell it in the year of the child. Tell the good news of Jesus to children, and celebrate as they share the love of Christ with others.

## The Church of Right Now

Everyday is kid's day, and that includes Sundays in May and June and every other month. Martin Luther shares a word with preachers, reminding them that this idea pertains also to the Sunday sermon:

Cursed be every preacher who aims at lofty topics in the church. . . . When I preach here I adapt myself to the circumstances of the common people. I don't look at the doctors and masters, of whom scarcely forty are present, but at the hundred or the thousand young people or children. It is to them that I preach, to them that I devote myself, for they too need to understand. If others don't want to listen, they can leave. . . . we preach in public for the sake of plain people. Christ could have taught in a profound way, but he wished to deliver his message with the utmost simplicity in order that common people might understand. Good God, there are sixteen-year old[s] . . . in the church, and they don't understand lofty matters. (Ferry, 1990, p. 274)

Luther recognized that young people are not the Church of the future. They are the Church of right now. In his description of the Church in Article XII of the Smalcald Articles, Luther thanked God because, "a seven-year old child knows what the Church is, namely holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd." Young people, whether seven years old or sixteen, whether newly baptized, recently confirmed, or just graduated from high school or college need to hear the simple yet significant good news about Jesus, need to hear the caring and compassionate voice of their Shepherd. Many messages draw them—competing voices lure them away. The Church, specifically *this* Church, cannot become so preoccupied with the lofty affairs of masters and doctors that its attention is diverted from the hundreds, the thousands who need to hear and understand. Like Luther, let's devote ourselves first to the children, to the young people. Let everyday be kid's day, and every year be the year of the child in Christ's Church. Tell the good news about Jesus who says, "Let the little children come to me, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these!" (Mark 10: 14).

Our churches are faith incubators. With Baptism's renewing splash we welcome a child into the Lord's family. We receive that child as a fellow member of the body of Christ, a child of the same heavenly Father, to work with us in his Kingdom. Later, with Confirmation's sacred promise, we praise God for bringing his sons and

## *The Good News About Jesus in the Year of the Child*

daughters to the knowledge of their Savior, Jesus Christ, and for enabling them both with the heart to believe and with the mouth to confess his saving name. We further pray that they would continue steadfast and victorious to the day when all who have fought the good fight of faith shall receive the crown of righteousness. Those are our solemn pledges and earnest prayers in Baptism and Confirmation liturgies. We want the children to be brought to Jesus. We don't want to segregate them into "youth groups" away from the rest of the congregation or force them to resort to games or gimmicks to prevent boredom or inactivity. We want to engage them in meaningful youth ministry—ministry to them and through them to others. We want our older members to mentor, our parents and grandparents to model. We want to introduce our children to Jesus and to help them become well acquainted with him and his good news.

For the introduction to Jesus to be complete, however, we must not only be acquainted with the Savior but also know well the young people whom we introduce to him. Would that I could say, "I know youth well," but gaps between generations are never easily surmounted.

True, five of them live in my household—three sons and two daughters, teens and pre-teens. I observe them closely and engage them

intimately, but being a parent hardly makes one an instant expert on the subject of youth. Other parents might agree—kids are not always easy to figure out. The effort to bridge the generation gap can be quite exasperating.

Of course, my work on a college campus gives me opportunity to work with many more young people beside my own children—thousands of them from all across the country and around the globe. I also observe these young people closely and

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engage them intimately—eager to help them, as our university mission statement indicates, “to grow in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and in the world.” Much of what I do and have done in ministry is dedicated to telling the good news about Jesus to the young people the Lord has placed into my life. Those may be sufficient credentials to deliver this essay, but the experiences themselves have taught me something else. Not only is there much for me to learn *about* young people today, there is also much for me to learn *from* young people today. As a parent it is part of my vocation to help my children learn. As president of Concordia University Wisconsin I am called by the Church to help provide Christian Higher Education to students. But, the unexpected blessing that I have now come to expect and to receive everyday is that I gain so much from them. Yes, let’s get to know them better—we have lots to learn!

## **Understanding the “Millenials”**

The “Millenials”—that is what we call this generation to distinguish it from Generations X or Y, the Baby Boomers, or others. The so-called “Greatest Generation”—the generation that lived through the Great Depression, World War, Cold War, and everything since—is well into decline, and more of its members die each day. Our nation will surely miss them, their civic-minded commitment, their dedication, their selflessness. The Millenials, by contrast, have known little of poverty or war. Much different from their parents’ parents’ experiences, long-lasting peace, remarkable prosperity, and unprecedented advances in technology have characterized their lives. Despite the differences, I hold hope that this will be the next “Greatest Generation.” The tendency is to speak about those that follow with misgiving or suspicion—again gaps between generations are not easily overcome. Occasionally I will hear some of the tired, old refrains about the “problems with kids today.” Kids today do have problems, and I will mention a few of them, but from what I (and others) observe, kids today are also problem-solvers with admirable service orientation and profound sense of mission. We should be well served in the Church by these particular youth in the future because when given opportunity they serve so well in the Church today! Let’s look closer. But first we must take a closer look at ourselves. The best way to begin better to understand what’s up with young people today may be to look first at the generation they are supposed to look up to—ours.

Perhaps the biggest problem facing the Millenials today is the rest of us. I am guessing that many reading this belong to the generation that captured America’s attention like none before or since: the Baby Boomers, people born between 1943

## *The Good News About Jesus in the Year of the Child*

and 1960. There were 79 million of us born during those years—30 million more than the previous generation. In the 60s and 70s when we became teens ourselves, church youth programs accommodated us. Stress was placed on entertainment and fellowship, and resources were diverted to youth ministry. As Boomers have aged, society's focus has remained zeroed in on us. Boomers have political and financial clout. The Church also is preoccupied with us. Much energy and effort, lots of money and other resources are being dedicated to restructure worship and programs to create systems and experiences to draw adults. Meanwhile the attention given to teen trouble in recent decades has mainly focused on how self-absorbed Boomer parents abandon, neglect, or disregard the needs of their kids (Collison, 2000). Society is obsessively fixed on the Boomers, and we Boomers are notoriously fixed on ourselves.

But, we cannot continue to be self-absorbed. Teen population will grow at an astonishing rate during the next decade. In 2010 there will be 30.8 million teenagers—900,000 more than today, and 4 million more than in 1969 when Woodstock began to draw attention to the Boomers. What preparations will we make to minister to this swelling youth population? And look out just a little farther. The Census Bureau projects a U.S. population of 571 million people in the year 2100 (more than double today's 275 million). We will reach 300 million by 2011, 400 million by 2049, and 500 million by 2081. Overall, the fastest growing population will be older, but the largest group will be those aged 15 to 19 (Collison, 2000). Simply summarized, there are lots of young people, and there will be lots more in the future. This fact demands our attention right now.

The Millenials are many, and as they have begun to come of age we can make some broad generalizations about them. I am concerned about stereotypes—what I say may not fit the young people in your family or your congregations. Nevertheless, it is easier to begin with broad categories and allow for individual exceptions or distinctions. Broadly speaking, therefore, we can say that their lives' pace is quick. Remote control symbolizes their reality: change is constant and focus is fragmented. They tend to be more self-reliant having had to do more for themselves because both parents work or because they live in single-parent families where the one parent must work. Relationships with friends, it corresponds, are vitally important. Friends are where the action is for our youth, and shopping with friends must be where they spend lots of time. They certainly spend lots of money! Teens spend \$140 billion a year on retail goods including \$1.2 billion spent on-line (Collison, 2000).

They are a cyber-suckled community. Electronic baby-sitters are well known to them. They have grown up in front of tubes, screens, or boxes that define their

perceptions of reality—a reality that is anything but innocent. Film critic Roger Ebert said, “It used to be that teenagers would sneak to movies and see adults having sex. Now adults go to movies to see teenagers having sex” (Youth Culture Update, 2001). Forty percent of teens admit to having had sexual intercourse, 55% to oral sex (Youth Culture Update, 2000, May/June). Pornography is an epidemic on the Internet. Teens say they fear violence in their schools—they see plenty of violence on their screens, too. What a twisted, tormented distortion of reality. “It is a half hour before Judgment Day,” said Columbine killer Dylan Klebold on a videotape made the day of the massacre, “I don’t like life very much.” Few peers would understand his horrible actions, but more than a few share his sense that this troubled life and unforgiving world leave much to be desired.

A few more things: Be aware as well that the Millenials do not tend to trust adults. That sounds similar to the attitude of Boomers in the 60s who were suspicious of the establishment. But not trusting anyone over 30 back then included not trusting survivors of the Depression, World War II veterans, and couples in four-decade marriages. The lack of trust today, as one observer puts it, “is derived more from the fact that many of today’s ‘establishment’ were the architects of societal breakdown. . . . The Millenials, in one sense, have good reason not to ‘trust’ adults” (Zoba, 1997, p. 20). Skepticism shields them from disappointment. You won’t be disappointed if you don’t expect anything from unreliable adults in the first place.

Millenials also tend not to trust religion. They are quite often interested in spirituality but not organized religion. As filmmaker Kevin Smith responded when his movie ‘Dogma’ was accused of ridiculing the Roman Catholic Church, “I’m not saying the Church is bad, just that God is better” (Youth Culture Update, 2000, January/February). Theirs is a faith that tends to be eclectic, fluid, in motion. They are open to investigation of divergent faiths, assorted paths to God, and often recoil at exclusive claims about truth. Described as “Postmodern Pilgrims,” they are on a journey to collect varied life experiences the way that preceding generations sought to collect various things.

## **The Next “Greatest Generation”**

So what is the basis for confidence that this fragmented, distorted, suspicious, drifting community of young people will become the next “Greatest Generation”? Author and generation-cycles watcher William Strauss, the man who first dubbed this generation the Millenials, believes this will become the next “civic” generation. Strauss observes that Boomer parents have finally begun to protect children from the abortive social experiment they themselves launched a quarter century or so ago.

## *The Good News About Jesus in the Year of the Child*

Boomer parents lament not raising their children as well as their own parents raised them. Strauss says, "This parental concern of the repentant Boomers, together with a clarion call of national concern will imbue the Millennials with a team spirit and sense of purpose and civic resolve to overcome severe problems." The environment of public cynicism and the absence of heroes that this generation has inherited will produce in them a yearning for real heroes. "They will be the heroes," Strauss says, "You watch" (Zoba, p. 23).

I don't know about the sociological speculation, but I am watching. I am watching, very closely, as a parent and as an educator. I am looking at the generation of young people who are supposed to be looking up to my generation and to me, and I am impressed. I am impressed by their needs. I am impressed by their deeds. I am impressed by the numbers of students who need to seek out professional counseling on our campus because of the emotional and psychological baggage they carry from their dysfunctional upbringing—they are looking for help. I am impressed that hundreds and hundreds of them on our campus participate in service-oriented activities that require significant personal sacrifice because they want to help others. They will be heroes, you watch, these children of the next great "civic" generation.

Everyday of this "year of the child," and every year of this millennium of our Lord, we need to nurture them with the good news about Jesus. It is good news that this fragmented, distorted, suspicious, drifting generation needs most of all. Their needs for trust; for purpose; for direction; for support; for friendship; for meaning find resolution in the suffering Savior Jesus Christ.

But, the Church, our Church, needs to do more than just watch. Everyday of this "year of the child," and every year of this millennium of our Lord, we need to nurture them with the good news about Jesus. It is good news that this fragmented, distorted, suspicious, drifting generation needs most of all. Their needs for trust; for purpose;

for direction; for support; for friendship; for meaning find resolution in the suffering Savior Jesus Christ. Their need for forgiveness and grace in an unforgiving world finds an answer in the loving, living Lord Jesus Christ. Mark this, because here is what is at stake for the Church: faith focused on Jesus Christ, faith anchored in Jesus Christ, will help transform young heroes into heroes of faith. I have been watching; it is happening! If the young people that I am privileged to serve among on my campus are any indication, it is happening as we speak.

### **Telling the Good News of Jesus to Millenials**

Parents, as always, will have a shaping impact. Friends, as mentioned, will influence each other—in this generation perhaps more than any other. When both family and friends are involved and active in the Christian faith, there is a more inviting environment for the Church's ministries. When both family and friends are unchurched, the challenge is enormous. But, with a loving God and a powerful Gospel, the Church faces no obstacle that is insurmountable. The good news of Jesus transforms unsuspecting heroes into heroes of faith. It is happening.

What makes it happen? One key for the Church is an engaged, relevant catechesis. This is no secret, though it is often downplayed or overlooked. Luther understood it well enough when he thought about the young people to whom he preached in his sermons. When parish visitors returned with reports about how the people, including the young people, did not grasp even the rudiments of the faith, it troubled Luther greatly. Following the historic model of the Church, he encouraged catechesis. Subsequent parish visitations revealed that this work had to be ongoing. The good news about Jesus, the message of the Gospel and all of the essential articles of the faith, required consistent and constant review and reflection. The same vigilance is necessary today.

But, to be effective today there must be something else as well: stories—your stories. Interestingly, in an age when young people are very skeptical of "truth claims," one form of truth they do respect is the "story." They value others' authentic experiences and are willing to listen and learn from them. Tell stories. Tell your stories of faith and life in Christ, the stories of your parents and grandparents and great grandparents. These are stories that will communicate *the Story*—the old, old story of Jesus and his love. As part of his catechizing of his disciples Jesus told them stories. We would do well to follow that pattern.

Have you ever seen the feature on the Tonight Show called "Jay Walking"? Host Jay Leno walks around and asks folks off the street very basic questions about history, or politics, or contemporary life and culture—the answers are ones that it is

## *The Good News About Jesus in the Year of the Child*

presumed everybody should know. I suppose what makes the feature funny is that people do not know, they do not understand. Yet, I wonder what a catechetical "Jay Walk" among some of our young people today might reveal. While I am hopeful about the youth that we minister to in our parishes, I am not so naïve as to suppose there is no room for improvement in spiritual growth and understanding. I am far less optimistic about the many, many more young people outside of the Church. Is there hope; is there help for our youth? The Church has many resources at its disposal and much to offer. There is no panacea, but I would be remiss if I failed to draw your attention to one of our Church's historic strengths and one of our most promising possibilities for the future.

There is one place that I know for certain that catechesis and kids coalesce, a setting where learning and living link: Lutheran schools. I am grateful to God for schools like Mount Calvary Lutheran in Milwaukee. It is our family's church and the parish school our four youngest children attend. The school is staffed with dedicated, consecrated Lutheran schoolteachers whose synodical education has prepared them well to integrate faith and learning. I am grateful for the support that my wife and I have from these teachers who assist us in sharing our common faith with our children and helping them to grow. And, because it is a school that welcomes and encourages non-member children to attend (most of the children enrolled are not members but reside within the neighborhood community), I celebrate the ways in which the church and school staff work together to reach out through Lutheran education and Christian witness to tell the good news story of Jesus.

I am grateful to God for schools like Milwaukee Lutheran High School where my oldest son attends. Here, too, Lutheran school teachers embrace the opportunity to share Christ with youth as they incorporate faith throughout the curriculum and co-curricular programs. The commitment to excellence has helped the school to obtain welcome recognition and enjoy a positive reputation in the community. But what sets it and other Lutheran high schools like it apart is the fact that the good news of Jesus is pervasively present.

Obviously, I am grateful to God for the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System. Ours are the institutions that prepare Church professionals for teaching and other youth ministries and prepare students for seminary education. Ours are the schools that prepare young women and men to assume positions of leadership in Church and community within a wide array of Christian vocations. Ours are the places where Christian scholars give voice within their disciplines to the good news about Jesus while other college campuses privilege nearly any other point of view and relegate the tenets of the faith to the archives of



antiquated and outdated thought. Ours are the settings where Lutheran youth are challenged to plumb the depths of their baptismal faith, their catechetical faith. And ours are the settings where truth and falsehood grapple and where non-Christian students encounter the One who says of himself, "I am the Truth." Ours are the colleges and universities of the Church that help the Church to nurture its own youth, and that help the Church to reach out to embrace other young people who search for meaning. The Church, *this* Church, must do in the future what it has always held to be essential in the past. We must do all that we can to cement and secure the Church's relationship to Lutheran schools and to provide Christian education to the young.

"Kids today . . ."

Some want to throw up their hands in exasperation at a generation that seems to lack moorings, that appears to drift without an anchor, that is evidently reluctant to step in trust on to the supposed *terra firma* of its elders and their traditions. I say better to throw up our hands with hallelujahs at the promise and potential of the next "Great Generation" and to reach out with arms extended wide to embrace the opportunity given to us "at such a time as this" to help transform heroes into

Now is the time to fold our hands in prayer and ask for the same vision and courage that our "Great Generation" parents and their parents before them had to face the future. It was a vision and courage that moved them to establish and maintain Lutheran day schools, and Lutheran high schools, and Lutheran colleges to educate the youth of their time for the sake of the Church of their day, today, tomorrow, and everyday.

heroes of faith. Now is not the time to wring our hands with a self-absorbed worry that prompts short-term, shortsighted solutions to the problems that beset the Church at this moment, today. Now is the time to fold our hands in prayer and ask for the same vision and courage that our "Great Generation" parents and their parents before them had to face the future. It was a vision and courage that moved them to establish and maintain Lutheran day schools, and Lutheran high schools, and Lutheran colleges to educate the youth of their time for the sake of the Church of their day, today,

## *The Good News About Jesus in the Year of the Child*

tomorrow, and everyday. Everyday is kid's day in the Church. Everyday is a day for seven-year-olds to hear the voice of the Shepherd of tender youth; for sixteen-year-olds to hear the simple, saving message of the Lord Jesus Christ—the children's friend; for Millenials to hear the good news about Jesus—the Savior of this and that and every generation, world without end. Share your story—tell the good news about Jesus. In his Name. Amen.†

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## What Students Want from Their Principal

*"School days, I believe, are the unhappiest times in the whole span of human existence. They are full of dull, unintelligible tasks, new and unpleasant ordinances, brutal violations of common sense and common decency." (H.L. Mencken)*

Apparently H.L. Mencken had less than enjoyable memories of his school days. While school memories would elicit less harsh criticism from most of us, the reality is that school can be a difficult, arduous, scary, painful time for young people.

Students are vulnerable, and they know it. As Edward Pauly (1991) points out in his book *The Classroom Crucible*, each student is at the mercy of all the other people in the classroom. Each student's actions are exposed to the unrelenting scrutiny of everyone else in the classroom. The quality of the students' lives will be controlled in large part by those who make up their classrooms. And a student cannot do much about it (p. 40). A moment of clumsiness, a wrong answer, a forgotten assignment, or a poorly done test can open the floodgates of embarrassment and perceived failure. While having caring teachers and classmates can ease the strain considerably, the threat of disaster is always lurking in the background.

What can a principal do to make school life less threatening and more pleasurable? Principals are in a unique position. They, more than anyone, can influence the people who influence the students' lives.

Principals can, and must, help teachers create a caring atmosphere where mutual acceptance is the norm. They do this by what they say, but more so by what they do. If a principal is accepting of teachers, teachers are more able to be accepting of students. If principals are accepting of students, students are more accepting of each other. If a student notices that the principal has treated a classmate's mistake fairly, the student knows he has one less thing to worry about.

I recently discussed the role of the principal with a small group of students. Each had been a student in other schools earlier in their academic careers. Each was finishing a successful year in our school's eighth grade.

Among the things they mentioned was the importance of having a principal who remembered what it was like to be a student. They wanted someone who could empathize with them

and remember that his own history as a student was filled with imperfections.

They also noted the importance of having a principal who wouldn't jump to conclusions. They needed the assurance that if the principal suspected them of wrongdoing, they would be given a chance to explain themselves. When asked about consequences for their misdeeds, the students didn't ask for a merciful principal, only for one who would be a good listener and would be fair. When asked what they would most despise in a principal, they mentioned favoritism and making judgments based on previous negative experiences with a student.

The students indicated how important it was that principals admonish students for wrongdoing in private. They said they felt much more willing to comply with the wishes of a principal when they perceived his actions as a sincere desire to help the student rather than a desire to make a public example of the student.

They wanted a principal who was willing to admit his mistakes. Principals are far more credible in the eyes of students when they can acknowledge their own shortcomings and errors. Hypocrisy on the part of a principal is hard for a student to ignore.

One student mentioned that she wanted a principal who was intelligent. When asked what kind of intelligence she was referring to, she replied, "Principals should be intelligent about life." She went on to explain how important it is for students to know that their principal can see the big picture, can understand what is really important in students' lives, and can help them in their journey through life. She mentioned how easy it probably is for principals to be so concerned about things like report cards and fund raisers that they lose sight of the students themselves.

Students need to know that they and their principal are on the same side. They need to be assured that the principal is willing to be their fan. They don't necessarily want a principal who is a highly vocal cheerleader for them, nor do they want someone who embarrasses them by pointing out in public the good things they've done. They do want, however, someone who can communicate that he appreciates their efforts. Students crave nonverbal affirmations. Subtle things like a thumbs up or a smile mean a great deal students.

Students need to know that their principal likes them. They assume that the principal loves them in a Christian sense, but to know that the principal also likes them as people is crucial for the students.

The business of being a student is tough. So is the business of being a principal. When the two work together, life becomes more palatable for each. As Norman Cousins once observed, "Respect for the fragility and importance of an individual life is still the mark of an educated man."✠

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## Sensitizing Parents to the Role of Assets in Faith Development

As parents undertake the enormous responsibility of raising children in the Christian faith, they need to acquire skills and tools to assist them in their task. I submit this article as a tool that Christian educators can use to equip parents, especially parents of junior and senior high youth, within the church and community, to give their children the greatest number of developmental assets.

### What are Assets?

We typically think of assets as property, or resources, that we own. In terms of developmental assets, we can picture "investing" in assets of a different nature, a human nature. When Search Institute surveyed 243,000 students in grades six through 12 in 600 communities throughout 33 states, there was a marked difference between troubled teens and those "leading healthy, productive, positive lives." The healthy teens were strongly influenced by the presence of developmental assets. These assets can be broken down into internal and external in nature. The assets are further divided into eight subject areas: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.

### The Family, The Church and Faith Development

Faith development begins very early in life, often with a child's perception that God is just like their parent. Faith is then nourished through regular interactions with the means of grace: God's Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Further nourishment can also take place through prayer and a response to our faith, by serving God and others with our gifts.

Ideally, the home is the primary arena for faith development. In a supportive role, "the church still holds a vital and essential place for children, youth, and families in our society. . . . Congregations provide occasions for persons of all ages to see themselves through God's eyes as they search for their identity and purpose or vocation in the world. They also have the unique ability to reach out to the neighborhoods and surrounding

communities to partner with parents and other adults as they model faith and nurture healthy lifestyles for the children and youth around them" (Dumke, 1998, p. 15). The partnership between parents and the church is crucial in providing an environment that is conducive to positive faith development.

## **Assets and Faith Development**

What is the relationship between the 40 Assets and faith development? Peter Benson, president of Search Institute, presents this connection, "Asset-rich kids are more willing to take a path that is considered spiritual or religious. They are able to be reflective and go deeper, be hopeful, express gratitude, celebration and thankfulness. They have a sense of purpose" (Dumke, 1998, p. 22). Dr. Benson defines "asset-rich" children and youth as those who possess 30 or more assets.

## **Sensitizing Parents to the 40 Assets**

How can we introduce parents to the 40 Assets in a way that is meaningful and relatively easy to understand? In my congregation, we have successfully used an unpublished resource to help parents understand assets and intentionally develop ways for their children to gain more of them. The resource, entitled *Faith Development in Junior and Senior High Youth*, leads parents through nine sessions in a one-hour Bible class setting. Along with an introductory session, each of the eight categories of assets is covered in an individual session. Parents are asked to evaluate each asset and are encouraged to add to the list. In addition they are asked to evaluate the congregation's ministries for the presence of assets. The main focus of each session is a Bible study related directly to each category of assets. The feedback from parents about this resource has been quite positive. It has given them a new "lens" through which they view their role as parents. Through this resource we have also gathered valuable insight from parents regarding various aspects of youth ministry, as well as other ministries, within our congregation.

Search Institute provides dozens of resources that congregations can use to introduce parents to the 40 Assets and their value in the faith development of children and youth. *Take It to Heart* is helpful for congregations to evaluate ministry to children, youth, and families. It includes a daylong workshop format for evaluating current ministries and a tool for planning from an asset-building perspective. *What Kids Need to Succeed* is a great tool for individual or group study of each asset. We have used excerpts from this book in our monthly church newsletter as a way to sensitize parents and church members at-large to the concept of assets and how they can help to develop assets in children and youth.

## **A Final Thought**

"The promises of God not only sustain faith but give it birth. The only way to

talk about faith in its beginning is in terms of a receiving of gifts of God and a trusting in his promises" (Droege, 1983, p. 72). God has given each of us gifts to be used for his glory and has promised eternal life for all who trust in him. One of the most fulfilling moments in ministry comes in observing the transformation of parents from "chauffeurs" to faith mentors for their children, and partners in faith development with the church. May God bless you as you equip parents to be the primary faith developers for their children.†

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I have long believed in the important role that music and the arts can play in helping students learn, achieve and succeed. Education in theater, dance and the visual arts is one of the most creative ways we have to find the gold that is buried just beneath the surface. They (children) have enthusiasm for life, a spark of creativity and vivid imaginations that need training...training that prepares them to become confident young men and women.

US Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, March 21, 1998

## **From a Misconception to the Meaningful: An Open Letter from Dr. Richard Fischer, Professor of Music and Director of the CURF Wind Symphony**

One of the greatest blessings God has given to humanity has been the arts. When you look at his creation, the beauty you find in water, plants, animals, the formation of the ground, how can we begin to express the awe felt using merely words? Throughout history, people have alluded to the beauty of the world, its impact, and the feelings they have had using the depth and breadth the arts provide for the expression of ideas. The Bible speaks of music as utilitarian, but also as soothing for the soul and for the praise and worship of God. For all people, across all continents, each society finds the development of music as very important—useful, but also evoking something spiritual and emotional. Music is found in almost every event in every society in some capacity or other. God gave us this ability to perform, create, and listen to music. I believe that is a great gift.

We, as human beings, are looking for something deeper. The arts, in so many ways, can take us where we haven't been within our own soul or imagination. Many times it happens when we least expect it—through a concert, while reading a poem, surrounded by nature, looking at sculpture—and we react to it. We begin searching, consciously or subconsciously, for those kinds of experiences again and again.

If we really look at God, his creation and his blessings, we need to connect those blessings with his people. Not to allow children the ability to enjoy the talent they are given is a travesty. So many still look at music as a frill. Actually it is something that should be learned and understood whereby children develop the ability to express themselves. Whatever we do in music needs to be done for every child. Somehow we equate being involved with music with musical talent—that it's only for the musically gifted. There are circumstances where that is true, but in general music, exploring each person's individuality and life through music has nothing to do with "making the cut." We have to get rid of the notion that music is just for certain people and recognize that there's "music for life" for everyone we teach. From the earliest stages of schooling, it is quality teaching, training, and learning which sets the stage for music for life—sets up deeper understanding and experiences with music throughout life.

Sadly, in many schools music is not a regular part of the curriculum for every child. More often than not, even when there

# **Educating the Whole Child**

*by Jean Harrison*



are music experiences, they are limited to performance opportunities and so often the quality is questionable at best. Do we find beauty in Lutheran schools? Not usually. A great percentage of students who do have "general" music do not look forward to the experiences because of a lack of quality in teaching or materials, or both. Many times teachers don't teach the uniqueness of music but try to teach it like other things. It should be something students look forward to, not dread. A key issue is the development of freedom and safety in the learning environment.

There is something very freeing about nurturing a child's imagination. When children are free to feel and express through a variety of means, then they are truly experiencing greatness. They are expressing themselves—where they are in life and how they connect to the world around them. The reward of coming up with something that's uniquely their own, not a copy of somebody else's, is something they can build upon.

So much of children's success in expression, has to do with the teacher's attitude and how they view themselves. When you look at the arts, you see that they involve various kinds of skills. Technical aspects are fundamental and have to be explored and practiced by all students. However, the arts also involve our imaginations, our feelings, saying something through art that can't be said with the spoken word. What kinds of expressive development are students allowed to do? Is there a diversity in experiences and directions where they have the chance to go and grow? Are students allowed to share, create, and express, or are teachers telling them how to feel? Personal expression is key, not imitation. The atmosphere must be free of judgement, fear, or intimidation. Students must be free to create something.

In the ideal program, there should be a general music program for all students in the school with a teacher whose philosophy is solid, enthusiastic, and passionate, someone who understands that the curriculum needs to be more than just singing—needs to be comprehensive. There needs to be a continuous striving for a broad scope of quality experiences. The program must provide children opportunities to make, create, explore, listen, move, communicate—a multiplicity of experiences with a variety of media.

What I hope would happen through this is that there would somehow be a higher regard for music, and all the arts in the curriculum. I hope everyone would take some time to discover more about music and children and that this discovery would precipitate change for the better. If teachers are in a constant state of growth and thirsting, in every area they are involved including the arts, they will discover things that will make the arts exciting for children, and in turn for themselves. If you don't have a natural curiosity for learning then don't teach. There must be a love for learning on the part of the teacher first and foremost. We get to know ourselves through music. We find ourselves going deeper into ourselves. That is important for every person, everyone in God's creation—most especially the children.†

## The Power of Participation

It happens every fall. Anxious parents hastily prepare their reluctant children to enter another year of education. Gone are the carefree days of summer, when schedules are flexible, vacations expose family members to unique new destinations and fresh insights, and children of all ages are engaged in outdoor activities of their own choosing. The school year brings with it a different set of learning experiences that engage students. It doesn't take long before they become accustomed to their new schedules and routines. Classroom activities, athletic events, social interaction, performances, and countless other opportunities for involvement soon bring even the most hesitant of young learners to a realization that they are valued, respected, and admired by their teachers and peers. Participation matters.

Teachers can learn a few lessons from their students. Throughout the history of Lutheran education in the United States, the expectations that society, the Church, and parents have placed on those who teach in classrooms and administer schools have dramatically changed. Yet in many ways, not so much is different. "Participation" has evolved from responsibility for virtually every element of day-to-day school life to having so much facing them that the most challenging decision is what to do first. Lutheran educators have a long tradition of being active in their ministries. Though the "what" has changed with shifting expectations, the "why" remains solid. Lutheran education professionals have always recognized and appreciated the value of participation in forming the profession and the future of the Church. But what prepares us to take on the challenges of each new school year and come away as refreshed and enriched as our students? Participation matters!

In all its years of formation, the full development of the profession of Lutheran educator has actually been hampered in part by the *lack* of participation experienced within the profession itself. Although no one doubts that educators are *busy*, we are often overwhelmed with activities that are not central to the role. Professional development, exploration of new instructional avenues, interpersonal relationships, family life, and even spiritual development can take a back seat to tasks that seem important at the time, but have no lasting significance. Decisions to participate in Bible study, workshops, conferences, social events, and leadership opportunities are personal. Lutheran educators need the freedom to make such decisions and must be empowered to carry them out.

Unfortunately, factors that prevent such participation are often

**Today's Lutheran Educator**  
*by Jonathan Laabs, Executive Director of the Lutheran Education Association*

dominant in the lives of Lutheran education professionals. The school or congregation often does not support and make available necessary development. Administrators may not recognize the value of personal and professional growth. Local and national agencies may not allow for full participation or decision making by Lutheran educators. In the LCMS, for example, Commissioned Ministers are still not allowed to have voting privileges at District or Synodical conventions, while clergy and lay members have been granted such status since the founding of the church body. Such external variables are often responsible for Lutheran church workers leaving the profession, finding a premature need for a change, or experiencing feelings of inadequacy and less satisfaction in ministry.

How can Lutheran education professionals find fulfillment from participation in their personal, professional, and spiritual development? What are some ways of more fully participating in the development of the profession and the growth of the Church?

Consider the following:

- Develop a plan for spiritual, personal, and professional growth and participation. Commit to it. Ask someone close to you to do the same, and hold each other accountable.
- Assess your priorities. Consider what contributes most to your faith life, your family, your personal well-being and your ministry. Maximize opportunities in those areas. Put other commitments in their proper context.
- Seek opportunities for participation in your congregation *aside from* those responsibilities associated with your ministry there.
- Respond positively to requests for community service. Seek new possibilities. Apply your leadership skills and education training to groups outside the church setting.
- Become involved with local, regional, and national opportunities for service in the Church. Most boards, commissions, and committees currently have specific spots set aside for Lutheran educator involvement. If you don't know what's available, *ask!*
- Take a stand for increased participation of Lutheran education professionals in the decision-making process of the church body. There is growing momentum toward finally including *all* church workers in planning and policymaking at all levels. Watch for new developments in the near future!
- Activate (or accelerate) your participation in *your* professional organization: Lutheran Education Association. Your peers around the country currently assume at least fifty leadership positions. If you don't know what you can do, *ask!*

God has truly blessed the ministry of Lutheran educators for more than 150 years. He continues to energize his workers to *participate* in proclaiming the Gospel each day. Our job is to respond with a joy-filled "yes"!✠

## Blessed Are . . . We!

The Beatitudes of Matthew 5:1-10 strongly affirm that we are certainly blessed as God's people! We are blessed each day in the Lord because of his great love for us in Jesus Christ! As we focus on the gifts that the Lord gives to us each day, we share those gifts with children, youth, and adults around us. What a great way to live!

It has been my experience that children and youth teach us adults so many things about being blessed in the Lord. Here's a story to make my point:

*One day a father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the primary purpose of showing his son how poor people can be. They spent a couple of days and nights on a farm of what would be considered a very poor family. On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"*

*"It was great, Dad."*

*"Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked.*

*"Oh yes", said the son.*

*"So, what did you learn from the trip?" asked the father.*

*The son thought a minute and then answered, "I saw that we have one dog and they had four."*

*"We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden, and they have a creek that has no end."*

*"We have imported lanterns on our patio, and they have the stars at night."*

*"We have a small piece of land to live on, and they have fields that go beyond our sight."*

*"We have servants who cut our lawn and clean our house, but they serve others."*

*"We buy our food, but they grow theirs."*

*"We have walls around our property to protect us, but they have friends to protect them."*

*With this the boy's father was speechless. Then his son added, "Thanks, Dad, for showing me how poor we are!"*

All too often we forget what we have and concentrate on what we do not have. It is so easy to think that the gifts we have in life are gifts that we have earned and deserved, rather

## Multiplying Ministries

by Rich Bimler

than seeing that all of life is a gift given to us by a loving and gracious God.

One person's worthless object is another person's prize possession. It's all a matter of perspective.

"Blessed are we!" Blessed are we through our Lord's birth, life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Blessed are we because he loves us and provides everything for us to continue to serve him by serving others.

Today I thank God for the children, youth and adults around me, whom I so often take for granted. I thank God for coming into my life at Baptism to redeem me so that, indeed, I can live a life of thanksgiving to the Lord for all that I am in Christ! Today, and every day, let us continue to celebrate life by affirming how blessed we really are in the Lord. Let us share joy in all we have, especially our friends, family, and the community of faith around us. Let us share our riches in the Lord with those people that God has placed around us. Let us continue to remind each other that life is not about possessing as many "Beanie Babies" as possible, but rather about celebrating the simple gifts that God puts around us each day—and then sharing these gifts with others!

Blessed are we—indeed!†

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"I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy; but most importantly music, for in the patterns of music and all the arts are the keys of learning."

Plato

## I Don't Want Any More Self-Esteem!

In my college days a professor was known for one of his lessons in which he had students write IALAC cards. The acronym stood for "I am lovable and capable." The corners were used for writing qualities and abilities of the student; the positive messages were to bolster one's self-esteem. Now, if there ever were an oxymoron that we Lutheran Christians should spot, it is "self-esteem." Think about it. We are to gain esteem from our "self," that is, our filthy, rotting maggot sack flesh that is anti-God and anti-others? I don't think so.

Recently I have found myself praying Psalm 139:23-24 whenever I have become upset over something. And, true to his Word, God has shown me an offensive way in me. I am battling a sense of inadequacy that is buried deep within me. Rather than boasting of my weakness and running to God for his strength, I find myself all too frequently trying to drum up a false sense of adequacy in some other source. Jeremiah referred to it as digging broken cisterns.

The most prevalent question in preschool meetings is, "Are you ready?" I found myself this past August feeling more unprepared and inadequate to enter the classroom than perhaps I had felt since my first few years of teaching. It dawned on me how our flesh seeks competence in experience or youthfulness, consistency or creativity, discipline or affability, organization or spontaneity. Our flesh even seeks out like-minded, capable colleagues who will make us look good, as long as they come through for us as we demand. A dear brother in Christ led me to see where my real adequacy, my true esteem, comes from:

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (II Cor. 3:5-6)

And yet, my flesh longs for finding the right letter! Just show me the formula; give me the method; outline the steps! Then I can proceed and succeed! Such foolishness will lead me to live my life, teach my classes, by laws. And I will fail, and fail miserably, because the written code kills. Such was the lesson of the Old Covenant.

But there is hope. Reread the verse carefully. "He has made us competent." Hmmm. Past tense. Dare I say it? It is finished. God has made me competent. I can stop my paranoid pursuits of

## Secondary Sequence

by Craig Parrott, Denver Lutheran High School

finding competence in myself. I can now admit my weaknesses, even boast of them, and throw them at Christ's feet and expect his grace to be sufficient for me. I can look for how his power is being made perfect in the very things I have tried to hide. I can rely on the Spirit to move in and through me in new and mysterious ways for his glory, others' blessings, and my joy.

A school year threatens my sense of adequacy. Inevitably I will open my mouth and out will spew law to a contrite heart or Gospel to a comfortable one. A lesson will explode in my face. I will wrong a colleague. I will struggle to reach a slow learner. I will meet a brick wall in a hardened heart. In short, I will face a situation that is too big for me. It is at that point that well meaning friends, fellow broken cistern diggers, will try to build me up. I will hear about my abilities, my successes in the past, my successes in the present. And none of that will ultimately help. The burden will only grow heavier.

For deep down, I know my flesh isn't lovable. And deep down I know my flesh isn't capable. But deeper still lies a longing for Someone Bigger to speak to me, to move me as I could never move myself. And I will be at the good point where he will have to do something through me or it won't happen. And I will be leaning solely, totally on him. My reputation, organization, intelligence, energy, and humor will be gone. I will have nothing, and yet everything, in him.

I want Christ-esteem. I want to trust his promises and not rue over my broken ones. I want his power flowing through me and not my foolhardy, just-try-harder mentality of rededication. I want my eyes focused on him rather than on myself. Please, do not give me more self-esteem. That is my problem! Set me free by God's Truth:

"IALAC: I am loved and competent . . . in Christ!"†

## Children and Creativity

The arts have an important place in the heart of each child. Young children are drawn to music, to beauty in creation, to colors and patterns. The arts are important, beginning at the beginning. But what exactly does that mean? Throughout this journal issue you are presented with a variety of perspectives on the arts. All of them are important. But what exactly does this have to do with young children?

### Teachers and Creativity

Teachers of young children have a responsibility to support and nurture the creativity and creative bent of each child. For some children, that creativity will manifest itself in the form of art—drawings, sculptings in mud and clay, or an unusual eye for color and form. For other children, music may be the creative outlet. Rhythm, melody, and an early ear for musical tones are a part of that form of creativity.

Creativity does not stop, however, with art and music. It also includes movement—the ability to move gracefully and rhythmically, possibly in response to music. It also includes drama—a talent for the dramatic in gestures, facial expressions, or tone of voice.

Teachers of young children need to be able to recognize each child's creative bent. Howard Gardner calls those intelligences. His claim is that there are multiple intelligences and that individuals tend to specialize in one or more of them. In terms of creativity, those intelligences include musical intelligence, spacial intelligence, and motoric intelligence. In addition, children with linguistic intelligence may also exhibit one or more creative outlets.

### Supporting Children's Creativity

Creativity is a gift of God, in children and in adults. I believe that all individuals are creative in one form or another. But not all individuals exhibit the types of creativity that are expressed in the arts.

So the challenge is to create a classroom environment in which creativity is fostered: a place where children have the freedom and the encouragement to build, to draw, to sing, to move, and to communicate in ways that are uniquely their own.

Creativity is fostered when children are given open-ended activities, activities in which correct answers or solutions are less

## Teaching the Young

by Shirley K. Morgenthaler



important than the process of discovering and of working toward a solution. Creativity comes alive in a classroom where children are given materials to explore and are then allowed to create a solution for those materials that suits their unique perspective.

## **The Creative Environment and the Creative Process**

Creativity requires two ingredients—space and time. Children need the space, the physical environment, that supports the creation of artistry—whether visual (art), auditory (music), or kinesthetic (movement or drama). Children also need the time in which to be creative. Creativity does not get turned on in a fifteen-minute play time. Creativity happens inside larger blocks of time, as inspiration is born out of manipulation and experimentation.

The creative environment also requires adults who are supportive and encouraging of the creative process. It requires adults who are able to support the manipulation and experimentation and to provide the space and the materials for such processes to emerge. Teachers also need to be patient. Creativity cannot be ordered. It cannot be forced. It can only be recognized as it emerges. That is the task of the teacher—to recognize its presence.

In order for children to be creative, they must first explore. They must first discover what the materials can do. They must have opportunities to master the materials, to discover the properties of the materials, the music, the dance space. To explore also requires exposure to various types of materials and creative resources.

Children must also have opportunity for practice. They must have time to answer the question, “what can I do with . . . ?” This question leads beyond exploration into intentional experimentation with the ways in which they can personally use the materials, the music, the space.

Children must also have time to master both the materials and their use of the materials. It is from this mastery that creativity can flow. Children need to know what the materials and resources can do—and what *they* can *do* with those materials and resources—in order to achieve a mastery over the artistry of the task. It is this mastery over the artistry that leads to true creativity. And true creativity leads to a satisfaction in discovery that is unmatched in other learning!

## **Creativity and God**

Creativity is a gift of God. For some of us, art or music are creative outlets. For others, movement and dance are the vehicles for the creative. So it is with children. God has created some form of creativity in each of his creatures. It is the challenge of the created to discover that form, and to foster and nourish it. It is the challenge of teachers to see the creative bent of each child, and to nourish it. That nourishing of creativity is nothing less than an appreciation of the miracle of God’s creation.†

**Robert Benne. (2001). *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.**

Three years ago, in an editorial prefacing a special issue devoted to exploring different models for Christian higher education, I wrote: "A generation or two ago, an institution such as Concordia, River Forest, with a 100% Lutheran faculty instructing a 100% Lutheran student body, all of whom were preparing for professional ministry in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, felt little need to articulate its distinctive nature as a Christian college or to debate the relationship between faith and learning in higher education. Today, however, there is nothing self-evident about what it means to be a Christian college." Soon after that issue was published, I was gently taken to task by a retired member of our faculty, who noted that each new generation believes the battles it fights have never been fought before. Some 40 years earlier he had been among the Young Turks goading the faculty about questions of mission and identity. His final point was a good one: the faculty at a Christian college must always be about the business of clarifying and articulating its distinctive (paradoxical, we Lutherans might say) relationship to the church and the world.

Certainly church-related colleges have always faced pressure toward secularization. After all, one reason Yale (our nation's second college) was founded is that Harvard (our first) was perceived by more conservative Calvinists as no longer fulfilling its purpose: "to preserve the purity and continue the propagation of the faith." George Marsden's landmark study, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (1994), documents this historical process by which some of our most prestigious universities shifted from a clearly defined Christian identity to a thoroughly secularized identity. He concludes, "[T]he largely voluntary and commendable disestablishment of religion has led to the virtual establishment of nonbelief, or the near exclusion of religious perspectives from dominant academic life. While American universities today allow individuals free exercise of religion in parts of their lives that do not touch the heart of the university, they tend to exclude or discriminate against relating explicit

## Book Reviews

religious perspectives to intellectual life" (p. 6).<sup>1</sup> Understanding that the tendency toward secularization in American higher education began almost immediately after the founding offers a helpful corrective to a false nostalgia for some imagined golden age. Nevertheless, my retired colleague's gentle reminder notwithstanding, the long history of secularization should not obscure the fact that this pressure has escalated in the past several decades, as Robert Benne's excellent *Quality with Soul* makes clear. The truth is, it has never been easy for colleges and university to keep faith with their religious traditions and it isn't likely to get any easier in the third millennium.

The good news is that recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in the fate of Christian colleges, as evidenced by such initiatives as the Rhodes Consultation on the Future of the Church-Related College and various efforts sponsored by the Lilly Foundation. Benne's *Quality with Soul*, one of a growing number of excellent books on the subject, should be required reading for all who care about the fate of Christian higher education and wish to think clearly about what it means to be a college of the church. Benne is a thoughtful and theologically astute observer; his perspective is shaped by his 18 years on the faculty of Roanoke College, an ELCA college which he acknowledges has "conformed to many of the dismal accounts of secularization offered by a number of scholars in the past few years" but which has worked to reengage its religious foundations in recent years. *Quality with Soul* looks both to the past, acknowledging and explaining the historical thinning of the connection between churches and their colleges, and to the future, offering a program by which church-related colleges might maintain and deepen—or in some cases reestablish—their relationships with their sponsoring church bodies. In these two purposes, Benne explicitly responds to and significantly extends the contributions of two important recent studies of church-related colleges: James Tunstead Burtchaell's *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (1998) and Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian's *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century* (1997).

Burtchaell's hefty tome (some 800 pages) tells the melancholy story of 17 colleges (including Concordia University, River Forest) from seven different religious traditions, arguing that in each (although to varying degrees) "the link of mutual patronage between college and church was severed in this century . . . by the hand of ecclesiastics and academics who saw themselves as uniting both identities within themselves, but not within their institutions" (ix). While Benne largely accepts and reiterates Burtchaell's conclusions about what has gone wrong as Christian

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<sup>1</sup>See Marsden's *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* for a compelling defense of the integration of faith perspectives into scholarly work, even within the secular academy.

colleges have secularized, his experience at Roanoke and his close observation of the six Christian colleges he examines in this book lead him to challenge Burtchaell's gloomy prediction of the inevitability of this decline into secularity. Benne believes that not only have many colleges (in the words of his subtitle) "kept faith with their religious traditions," but that it is also possible for colleges that have failed to do so to halt and reverse their slide into secularity. "Contrary to Burtchaell," he writes, "I believe that colleges that are not totally secularized can, with the proper leadership, forge a more meaningful and genuine connection with their sponsoring traditions" (6)

Part One, "The Darkening Trends," offers an explanation for the slide into secularization that has characterized so many Christian colleges. Benne persuasively outlines a number of causes for this trend, both internal and external to the colleges. Among the external forces working against colleges remaining distinctively Christian, two seem particularly worth mentioning. First, the dominant enlightenment paradigm, recognizing only reason as an avenue to truth, has been eagerly embraced by institutions eager for enhanced academic credibility and by faculty trained in the "methodological atheism" of secular graduate programs. Second, institutions fearful for their very survival have often capitulated to market forces, toning down any signs of their denominational identity and Christian distinctiveness (Benne calls this response a "flight from specificity") and embracing a variety of professional programs—business, law, nursing, information science, and the like—which less easily bear the stamp of Christian conviction than do these schools' traditional liberal arts offerings.

For Benne the internal forces leading to secularization ultimately reduce to a matter of inadequate theological responses to cultural and demographic shifts. As the colleges lost the ethno-religious homogeneity that had once defined them (whereby, for example, an LCMS college could unreflectively maintain its identity simply by virtue of the number of German Lutherans constituting its faculty and student body), "most were not ready to retrieve or reassert their religious identities because they didn't have the theological resources to define themselves cogently as Christian enterprises in higher education" (35). Benne concludes, "Fundamentally, . . . disengagement took place because both parties, the school and the church, lost confidence in the Christian account of reality. At bottom this matter was a crisis of faith, or at least a crisis in faith's confidence in its own intellectual and moral potency. Deep down, both church leaders and faculty members no longer believed the Christian faith to be comprehensive, unsurpassable, and central" (47).

As Mary Todd wrote in a review of *The Dying of the Light* for *Lutheran Education*, "The question at the heart of this debate is . . . , how thick does the affiliation with the institutional church need to be? How thin is too thin for a school to still call itself 'a college of the church'?" Having traced the roots of secularization, Benne takes up Todd's question, offering a significant nuance to discussions of

secularization. Whereas Burtchaell seems to recognize only two categories, the thoroughly Christian college and those that are utterly secularized—and Hughes and Adrian perhaps too readily accept a wide variance in church-relatedness as equally faithful incarnations of the mission of the Christian college<sup>2</sup>—Benne identifies a broader range of variation. He presents a typology of Christian colleges, identifying four distinct types, based on the strength of their connection to their religious heritage: Orthodox, Critical Mass, Intentionally Pluralistic, Accidentally Pluralistic. The first two share a commitment to the Christian vision as the organizing paradigm for the life of the institution; they differ in that the orthodox school requires all faculty and staff—and sometimes all students—to subscribe to a statement of belief, while the critical mass school is content if a “critical mass” (variously defined) of each of its constituencies subscribes to the sponsoring faith tradition. In pluralistic schools, “the religious paradigm has been dethroned from its defining role,” leaving a Christian faith perspective as just one among competing accounts of reality (51). The intentionally pluralistic school still deliberately marks itself in various ways as related to its sponsoring tradition; in accidentally pluralistic colleges, all evidence of its historical Christian identity has vanished (think of Harvard or Duke, for example). Unfortunately, Benne’s typology, valuable as it is, doesn’t account for how easily colleges can compartmentalize their programs, addressing different “student bodies” in markedly different ways. Thus, within a particular college, one might find church-work programs that are clearly orthodox, liberal arts programs that are largely critical mass, and adult education and graduate programs that tend to be intentionally pluralistic (at best).

In Part Two, “Six Ventures in Christian Humanism,” Benne offers specific strategies by which schools might “thicken” their relationship with their sponsoring church bodies, identifying orthodox or critical mass colleges that have successfully remained Christian while achieving academic excellence and examining how they have done so. As he acknowledges, his approach here echoes that of Hughes and Adrian in *Models for Christian Higher Education*, but with two important modifications. First, Benne insists on examining his model institutions for himself rather than allowing these institutions to tell their own stories (an approach that leads Hughes and Adrian to excessively optimistic assessments of certain colleges, I suspect). Second, and most important, Benne distills from the examples of these colleges specific lessons about how colleges might pursue academic excellence while remaining faithful to their Christian identity and mission.

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<sup>2</sup>For example, one of Hughes and Adrian’s “model” institutions is California Lutheran University, whose faculty is only 35 percent Lutheran and whose Lutheran student body has declined to 24.5 percent, statistics that suggest CLU cannot be considered a critical mass school (120).

Benne's case studies encompass two orthodox colleges, Calvin College (Reformed) and Wheaton College (evangelical), and four critical mass schools, St. Olaf and Valparaiso (representing two different Lutheran traditions), Notre Dame (Catholic), and Baylor (Southern Baptist). He examines each in terms the "three components of the Christian tradition that must be publicly relevant: its vision, its ethos, and the Christian persons who bear that vision and ethos" (6). Although different faith traditions will articulate the relationship between faith and learning differently, the vision of any viably Christian college, Benne maintains, must articulate the Christian account of reality as comprehensive, unsurpassable, and central. Orthodox colleges (especially those operating with a Reformed understanding of the relationship between faith and learning) typically use the language of "integration," insisting that all knowledge be critiqued by and brought into harmony with the Christian account of reality. Critical mass schools are more likely to speak in terms of a dialogue between faith and learning, of "engagement" between the Christian account and secular sources of knowledge. This approach has the advantage of preventing Christian faith from too easily "trumping" secular knowledge, before such knowledge can be thoughtfully explored and understood on its own terms. On the other hand, as Benne points out, in such schools the threat always exists of a bifurcation of faith and learning into two unconnected realms (142).

Part Three, "Strategies for Maintenance and Renewal," is the briefest portion of the book but well worth a careful reading. Benne seeks to distill practical lessons from the experiences of his six premier colleges that might guide Christian colleges in maintaining or deepening their church-relatedness. Here he addresses himself to colleges that have become either intentionally or accidentally pluralist rather than to those colleges which have maintained a high degree of connectedness to their sponsoring churches. His focus on "reconnection" offers hope that, though the light has dimmed in many Christian colleges, it need not be dead.

What does all of this mean for higher education in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod? Benne offers reason for hope but food for critical self-evaluation as well. The colleges of the LCMS's Concordia University System, according to the typology outlined here, must be considered solidly critical mass institutions. By Benne's standards, the ethos and people of these institutions have largely remained in place and seem sufficient to maintain a healthy relationship between the colleges and their sponsoring church. In the area of vision, however, there is cause for concern. Benne clearly admires Valparaiso, the LCMS related school in his study, and admits to a bias in favor of the Lutheran approach to faith and learning. He is harshly critical, however, of the LCMS, charging that "the Missouri Synod educational system is not producing nearly the number of solidly formed intellectuals it once did" and that its "stringent doctrinal orthodoxy" seriously hampers its ability to pursue academic excellence (a charge that strikes me as somewhat curious, given Benne's obvious

high regard for conservative and highly sectarian Calvin College) (139, 182).

Near the close of the book, as Benne addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the Lutheran view of Christ and culture in paradox, he offers a caution that demands to be taken seriously. "A genuinely Lutheran approach," Benne states, "would engage in a serious and extended conversation with all secular approaches. It would employ the full Christian theological account as the honored conversation partner in the dialogue with secular culture. But this dialectical approach, while persuasive in principle, has many flaws in practice. Lutherans have often separated Christ and culture, grace and nature, revelation and reason. The dialectical model at its best demands a critical mass of faculty willing to learn enough of the theological account to employ it effectively in dialogue with their own fields of inquiry" (203).

In that editorial three years ago I wrote, "What is called for then, is not nostalgic longing for the simpler, purer days of the past, but clear-eyed, thoughtful, and prayerful theological reflection." Benne provides us with a much needed model for such reflection.†

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# A Final Word

by George C. Heider, President, Concordia University, River Forest, IL

## Encouraging Random Acts of Kindness

During this past summer, it was my privilege to serve as a chaplain at the National Jamboree of the Boy Scouts of America. For ten days, I joined three others in meeting the spiritual needs of the fifteen hundred boys and adult leaders of Subcamp 10 (out of the roughly forty thousand attending the entire event). Among the most satisfying aspects personally was certainly the fact that my son was a part of one of the troops in the subcamp, so that we got to spend a few hours together trying our hands at the multitude of activities offered to participants.

So it was that, toward the end of our time there, we made our way to the skeet shooting range. It was totally new for both of us (indeed, neither of us had even fired a shotgun before). After safety instruction, each of us was paired up with a participant of similar height, with one partner shooting and the other loading. When it came our turn, we each got five shots at clay pigeons, launched spinning across a field.

I got two out of five—not bad, I thought, for a first-timer. I was sharing my “success” over dinner that night with the director of the subcamp, when he burst my bubble. The director informed me that two out of five was also the score of a blind Scout who had tried skeet shooting the day before.

Then he told me the rest of the story. Apparently, the Scout had tried his five shots and had missed all of them. Then the boy who was his partner had yielded his five shots, so the blind Scout could try again. That’s when he got his two clay pigeons.

In the great scheme of things, the seeing boy’s act makes little difference. But in an increasingly hurried and harried and competitive world, it suggests an important objective for all of us engaged in education: to encourage “random acts of kindness” (to quote a popular bumper sticker) among ourselves and our students. Whether in service of friends or of strangers or even of enemies (cf. the Good Samaritan), such “good turns” represent a chance to make a difference—however small—in our world. For those engaged in Christian education, however, they represent something far more: an opportunity to respond to the inevitable “Why?” with words of witness to the One who presented us with the gift not of a “random act of kindness,” but with his very life.

In fact, that makes it worth thinking about doing better than “random.”✠